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English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

GOLDSMITH

GOLDSMITH

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BY

WILLIAM BLACK

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GOLDSMITH

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"INNOCENTLY to amuse the imagination in this dream of life is wisdom." So wrote Oliver Goldsmith; and surely among those who have earned the world's gratitude by this ministration he must be accorded a conspicuous place. If, in these delightful writings of his, he mostly avoids the darker problems of existence—if the mystery of the tragic and apparently unmerited and unrequited suffering in the world is rarely touched upon—we can pardon the omission for the sake of the gentle optimism that would rather look on the kindly side of life. "You come hot and tired from the day's battle, and this sweet minstrel sings to you," says Mr. Thackeray. "Who could harm the kind vagrant harper? Whom did he ever hurt? He carries no weapon save the harp on which he plays to you; and with which he delights great and humble, young and old, the captains in the tents, or the soldiers round the

fire, or the women and children in the villages, at whose porches he stops and sings his simple songs of love and beauty." And it is to be suspected—it is to be hoped, at least—that the cheerfulness which shines like sunlight through Goldsmith's writings, did not altogether desert himself even in the most trying hours of his wayward and troubled career. He had, with all his sensitiveness, a fine happy-go-lucky disposition; was ready for a frolic when he had a guinea, and, when he had none, could turn a sentence on the humorous side of starvation; and certainly never attributed to the injustice or neglect of society misfortunes the origin of which lay nearer home.

Of course, a very dark picture might be drawn of Goldsmith's life; and the sufferings that he undoubtedly endured have been made a whip with which to lash the ingratitude of a world not too quick to recognise the claims of genius. He has been put before us, without any brighter lights to the picture, as the most unfortunate of poor devils; the heart-broken usher; the hack ground down by sordid booksellers; the starving occupant of successive garrets. This is the aspect of Goldsmith's career which naturally attracts Mr. Forster. Mr. Forster seems to have been haunted throughout his life by the idea that Providence had some especial spite against literary persons; and that, in a measure to compensate them for their sad lot, society should be very kind to them, while the Government of the day might make them Companions of the Bath or give them posts in the Civil Service. In the otherwise copious, thorough, and valuable *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, we find an almost humiliating insistance on the complaint that

Oliver Goldsmith did not receive greater recognition and larger sums of money from his contemporaries. Goldsmith is here "the poor neglected sizar"; his "marked ill-fortune" attends him constantly; he shares "the evil destinies of men of letters"; he was one of those who "struggled into fame without the aid of English institutions"; in short, "he wrote, and paid the penalty." Nay, even Christianity itself is impeached on account of the persecution suffered by poor Goldsmith. "There had been a Christian religion extant for seventeen-hundred and fifty-seven years," writes Mr. Forster, "the world having been acquainted, for even so long, with its spiritual necessities and responsibilities; yet here, in the middle of the eighteenth century, was the eminence ordinarily conceded to a spiritual teacher, to one of those men who come upon the earth to lift their fellow-men above its miry ways. He is up in a garret, writing for bread he cannot get, and dunned for a milk-score he cannot pay." That Christianity might have been worse employed than in paying the milkman's score is true enough, for then the milkman would have come by his own; but that Christianity, or the state, or society should be scolded because an author suffers the natural consequences of his allowing his expenditure to exceed his income, seems a little hard. And this is a sort of writing that is peculiarly inappropriate in the case of Goldsmith, who, if ever any man was author of his own misfortunes, may fairly have the charge brought against him. "Men of genius," says Mr. Forster, "can more easily starve, than the world, with safety to itself, can continue to neglect and starve them." Perhaps so; but the English nation, which

has always had a regard and even love for Oliver Goldsmith, that is quite peculiar in the history of literature, and which has been glad to overlook his faults and follies, and eager to sympathise with him in the many miseries of his career, will be slow to believe that it is responsible for any starvation that Goldsmith may have endured.

However, the key-note has been firmly struck, and it still vibrates. Goldsmith was the unluckiest of mortals, the hapless victim of circumstances. "Yielding to that united pressure of labour, penury, and sorrow, with a frame exhausted by unremitting and ill-rewarded drudgery, Goldsmith was indebted to the forbearance of creditors for a peaceful burial." But what, now, if some foreigner strange to the traditions of English literature—some Japanese student, for example, or the New Zealander come before his time—were to go over the ascertained facts of Goldsmith's life, and were suddenly to announce to us, with the happy audacity of ignorance, that he, Goldsmith, was a quite exceptionally fortunate person? "Why," he might say, "I find that in a country where the vast majority of people are born to labour, Oliver Goldsmith was never asked to do a stroke of work towards the earning of his own living until he had arrived at man's estate. All that was expected of him, as a youth and as a young man, was that he should equip himself fully for the battle of life. He was maintained at college until he had taken his degree. Again and again he was furnished with funds for further study and foreign travel; and again and again he gambled his opportunities away. The constant kindness of his uncle only made him the best

begging-letter-writer the world has seen. In the midst of his debt and distress as a bookseller's drudge, he receives £400 for three nights' performance of *The Good-Natured Man;* he immediately purchases chambers in Brick Court for £400; and forthwith begins to borrow as before. It is true that he died owing £2000, and was indebted to the forbearance of creditors for a peaceful burial; but it appears that during the last seven years of his life he had been earning an annual income equivalent to £800 of English currency.[1] He was a man liberally and affectionately brought up, who had many relatives and many friends, and who had the proud satisfaction—which has been denied to many men of genius—of knowing for years before he died that his merits as a writer had been recognised by the great bulk of his countrymen. And yet this strange English nation is inclined to suspect that it treated him rather badly; and Christianity is attacked because it did not pay Goldsmith's milkscore."

Our Japanese friend may be exaggerating; but his position is after all fairly tenable. It may at least be looked at, before entering on the following brief *résumé* of the leading facts in Goldsmith's life, if only to restore our equanimity. For, naturally, it is not pleasant to think that any previous generation, however neglectful of the claims of literary persons (as compared with the claims of such wretched creatures as physicians, men of science, artists, engineers, and so

[1] The calculation is Lord Macaulay's: see his *Biographical Essays.*

forth) should so cruelly have ill-treated one whom we all love now. This inheritance of ingratitude is more than we can bear. Is it true that Goldsmith was so harshly dealt with by those barbarian ancestors of ours?

CHAPTER II.

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE.

THE Goldsmiths were of English descent; Goldsmith's father was a Protestant clergyman in a poor little village in the county of Longford; and when Oliver, one of several children, was born in this village of Pallas, or Pallasmore, on the 10th November, 1728, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith was passing rich on £40 a year. But a couple of years later Mr. Goldsmith succeeded to a more lucrative living; and forthwith removed his family to the village of Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath.

Here at once our interest in the story begins: is this Lissoy the sweet Auburn that we have known and loved since our childhood? Lord Macaulay, with a great deal of vehemence, avers that it is not; that there never was any such hamlet as Auburn in Ireland; that *The Deserted Village* is a hopelessly incongruous poem; and that Goldsmith, in combining a description of a probably Kentish village with a description of an Irish ejectment, "has produced something which never was, and never will be, seen in any part of the world." This criticism is ingenious and plausible, but it is unsound, for it happens to overlook one of

the radical facts of human nature—the magnifying delight of the mind in what is long remembered and remote. What was it that the imagination of Goldsmith, in his life-long banishment, could not see when he looked back to the home of his childhood, and his early friends, and the sports and occupations of his youth? Lissoy was no doubt a poor enough Irish village; and perhaps the farms were not too well cultivated; and perhaps the village preacher, who was so dear to all the country round, had to administer many a thrashing to a certain graceless son of his; and perhaps Paddy Byrne was something of a pedant; and no doubt pigs ran over the "nicely sanded floor" of the inn; and no doubt the village statesmen occasionally indulged in a free fight. But do you think that was the Lissoy that Goldsmith thought of in his dreary lodgings in Fleet-Street courts? No. It was the Lissoy where the vagrant lad had first seen the "primrose peep beneath the thorn"; where he had listened to the mysterious call of the bittern by the unfrequented river; it was a Lissoy still ringing with the glad laughter of young people in the twilight hours; it was a Lissoy for ever beautiful, and tender, and far away. The grown-up Goldsmith had not to go to any Kentish village for a model; the familiar scenes of his youth, regarded with all the wistfulness and longing of an exile, became glorified enough. "If I go to the opera where Signora Colomba pours out all the mazes of melody," he writes to Mr. Hodson, "I sit and sigh for Lissoy's fire-side, and *Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night* from Peggy Golden."

There was but little in the circumstances of Gold-

smith's early life likely to fit him for, or to lead him into, a literary career; in fact, he did not take to literature until he had tried pretty nearly everything else as a method of earning a living. If he was intended for anything, it was no doubt his father's wish that he should enter the Church; and he got such education as the poor Irish clergyman—who was not a very provident person—could afford. The child Goldsmith was first of all taught his alphabet at home, by a maid-servant, who was also a relation of the family; then, at the age of six, he was sent to that village school which, with its profound and learned master, he has made familiar to all of us; and after that he was sent further a-field for his learning, being moved from this to the other boarding-school as the occasion demanded. Goldsmith's school-life could not have been altogether a pleasant time for him. We hear, indeed, of his being concerned in a good many frolics—robbing orchards, and the like; and it is said that he attained proficiency in the game of fives. But a shy and sensitive lad like Goldsmith, who was eagerly desirous of being thought well of, and whose appearance only invited the thoughtless but cruel ridicule of his schoolmates, must have suffered a good deal. He was little, pitted with the small-pox, and awkward; and schoolboys are amazingly frank. He was not strong enough to thrash them into respect of him; he had no big brother to become his champion; his pocket-money was not lavish enough to enable him to buy over enemies or subsidise allies.

In similar circumstances it has sometimes happened that a boy physically inferior to his companions has

consoled himself by proving his mental prowess—has scored off his failure at cricket by the taking of prizes, and has revenged himself for a drubbing by writing a lampoon. But even this last resource was not open to Goldsmith. He was a dull boy; "a stupid, heavy blockhead," is Dr. Strean's phrase in summing up the estimate formed of young Goldsmith by his contemporaries at school. Of course, as soon as he became famous, everybody began to hunt up recollections of his having said or done this or that, in order to prove that there were signs of the coming greatness. People began to remember that he had been suspected of scribbling verses, which he burned. What schoolboy has not done the like? We know how the biographers of great painters point out to us that their hero early showed the bent of his mind by drawing the figures of animals on doors and walls with a piece of chalk; as to which it may be observed that, if every schoolboy who scribbled verses and sketched in chalk on a brick wall, were to grow up a genius, poems and pictures would be plentiful enough. However, there is the apparently authenticated anecdote of young Goldsmith's turning the tables on the fiddler at his uncle's dancing-party. The fiddler, struck by the odd look of the boy who was capering about the room, called out "Æsop!" whereupon Goldsmith is said to have instantly replied,

> "Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,
> See Æsop dancing and his monkey playing!"

But even if this story be true, it is worth nothing as an augury; for quickness of repartee was precisely the accomplishment which the adult Goldsmith conspicuously

lacked. Put a pen into his hand, and shut him up in a room: then he was master of the situation—nothing could be more incisive, polished, and easy than his playful sarcasm. But in society any fool could get the better of him by a sudden question followed by a horse-laugh. All through his life—even after he had become one of the most famous of living writers—Goldsmith suffered from want of self-confidence. He was too anxious to please. In his eager acquiescence, he would blunder into any trap that was laid for him. A grain or two of the stolid self-sufficiency of the blockheads who laughed at him would not only have improved his character, but would have considerably added to the happiness of his life.

As a natural consequence of this timidity, Goldsmith, when opportunity served, assumed airs of magnificent importance. Every one knows the story of the mistake on which *She Stoops to Conquer* is founded. Getting free at last from all the turmoil, and anxieties, and mortifications of school-life, and returning home on a lent hack, the released schoolboy is feeling very grand indeed. He is now sixteen, would fain pass for a man, and has a whole golden guinea in his pocket. And so he takes the journey very leisurely until, getting benighted in a certain village, he asks the way to the "best house," and is directed by a facetious person to the house of the squire. The squire by good luck falls in with the joke; and then we have a very pretty comedy indeed—the impecunious schoolboy playing the part of a fine gentleman on the strength of his solitary guinea, ordering a bottle of wine after his supper, and inviting his landlord and his landlord's wife and daughter

to join him in the supper-room. The contrast, in *She Stoops to Conquer*, between Marlow's embarrassed diffidence on certain occasions and his audacious effrontery on others, found many a parallel in the incidents of Goldsmith's own life; and it is not improbable that the writer of the comedy was thinking of some of his own experiences, when he made Miss Hardcastle say to her timid suitor: "A want of courage upon some occasions assumes the appearance of ignorance, and betrays us when we most want to excel."

It was, perhaps, just as well that the supper, and bottle of wine, and lodging at Squire Featherston's had not to be paid for out of the schoolboy's guinea; for young Goldsmith was now on his way to college, and the funds at the disposal of the Goldsmith family were not over abundant. Goldsmith's sister having married the son of a well-to do man, her father considered it a point of honour that she should have a dowry: and in giving her a sum of £400 he so crippled the means of the family, that Goldsmith had to be sent to college not as a pensioner but as a sizar. It appears that the young gentleman's pride revolted against this proposal; and that he was won over to consent only by the persuasions of his uncle Contarine, who himself had been a sizar. So Goldsmith, now in his eighteenth year, went to Dublin; managed somehow or other—though he was the last in the list—to pass the necessary examination; and entered upon his college career (1745).

How he lived, and what he learned, at Trinity College, are both largely matters of conjecture; the chief features of such record as we have are the various means of raising a little money to which the poor

sizar had to resort; a continual quarrelling with his tutor, an ill-conditioned brute, who baited Goldsmith and occasionally beat him; and a chance frolic when funds were forthcoming. It was while he was at Trinity College that his father died; so that Goldsmith was rendered more than ever dependent on the kindness of his uncle Contarine, who throughout seems to have taken much interest in his odd, ungainly nephew. A loan from a friend or a visit to the pawnbroker tided over the severer difficulties; and then from time to time the writing of street-ballads, for which he got five shillings a-piece at a certain repository, came in to help. It was a happy-go-lucky, hand-to-mouth sort of existence, involving a good deal of hardship and humiliation, but having its frolics and gaieties notwithstanding. One of these was pretty near to putting an end to his collegiate career altogether. He had, smarting under a public admonition for having been concerned in a riot, taken seriously to his studies and had competed for a scholarship. He missed the scholarship, but gained an exhibition of the value of thirty shillings; whereupon he collected a number of friends of both sexes in his rooms, and proceeded to have high jinks there. In the midst of the dancing and uproar, in comes his tutor, in such a passion that he knocks Goldsmith down. This insult, received before his friends, was too much for the unlucky sizar, who, the very next day, sold his books, ran away from college, and ultimately, after having been on the verge of starvation once or twice, made his way to Lissoy. Here his brother got hold of him; persuaded him to go back; and the escapade was condoned somehow.

Goldsmith remained at Trinity College until he took his degree (1749.) He was again lowest in the list; but still he had passed; and he must have learned something. He was now twenty-one, with all the world before him; and the question was as to how he was to employ such knowledge as he had acquired.

CHAPTER III.

IDLENESS, AND FOREIGN TRAVEL.

But Goldsmith was not in any hurry to acquire either wealth or fame. He had a happy knack of enjoying the present hour—especially when there were one or two boon companions with him, and a pack of cards to be found; and, after his return to his mother's house, he appears to have entered upon the business of idleness with much philosophical satisfaction. If he was not quite such an unlettered clown as he has described in Tony Lumpkin, he had at least all Tony Lumpkin's high spirits and love of joking and idling; and he was surrounded at the ale-house by just such a company of admirers as used to meet at the famous Three Pigeons. Sometimes he helped in his brother's school; sometimes he went errands for his mother; occasionally he would sit and meditatively play the flute—for the day was to be passed somehow; then in the evening came the assemblage in Conway's inn, with the glass, and the pipe, and the cards, and the uproarious jest or song. "But Scripture saith an ending to all fine things must be," and the friends of this jovial young "buckeen" began to tire of his idleness and his

recurrent visits. They gave him hints that he might set about doing something to provide himself with a living; and the first thing they thought of was that he should go into the Church—perhaps as a sort of purification-house after George Conway's inn. Accordingly Goldsmith, who appears to have been a most good-natured and compliant youth, did make application to the Bishop of Elphin. There is some doubt about the precise reasons which induced the Bishop to decline Goldsmith's application, but at any rate the Church was denied the aid of the young man's eloquence and erudition. Then he tried teaching, and through the good offices of his uncle he obtained a tutorship which he held for a considerable time—long enough, indeed, to enable him to amass a sum of thirty pounds. When he quarrelled with his patron, and once more "took the world for his pillow," as the Gaelic stories say, he had this sum in his pocket and was possessed of a good horse.

He started away from Ballymahon, where his mother was now living, with some vague notion of making his fortune as casual circumstance might direct. The expedition came to a premature end; and he returned without the money, and on the back of a wretched animal, telling his mother a cock-and-bull story of the most amusing simplicity. "If Uncle Contarine believed those letters," says Mr. Thackeray, "—— if Oliver's mother believed that story which the youth related of his going to Cork, with the purpose of embarking for America; of his having paid his passage-money, and having sent his kit on board; of the anonymous captain sailing away with Oliver's valuable

luggage, in a nameless ship, never to return; if Uncle Contarine and the mother at Ballymahon believed his stories, they must have been a very simple pair; as it was a very simple rogue indeed who cheated them." Indeed, if any one is anxious to fill up this hiatus in Goldsmith's life, the best thing he can do is to discard Goldsmith's suspicious record of his adventures, and put in its place the faithful record of the adventures of Mr. Barry Lyndon, when that modest youth left his mother's house and rode to Dublin, with a certain number of guineas in his pocket. But whether Uncle Contarine believed the story or no, he was ready to give the young gentleman another chance; and this time it was the legal profession that was chosen. Goldsmith got fifty pounds from his uncle, and reached Dublin. In a remarkably brief space of time he had gambled away the fifty pounds, and was on his way back to Ballymahon, where his mother's reception of him was not very cordial, though his uncle forgave him, and was once more ready to start him in life. But in what direction? Teaching, the Church, and the law had lost their attractions for him. Well, this time it was medicine. In fact, any sort of project was capable of drawing forth the good old uncle's bounty. The funds were again forthcoming; Goldsmith started for Edinburgh, and now (1752) saw ~~Ireland~~ for the last time.

He lived, and he informed his uncle that he studied, in Edinburgh for a year and a half; at the end of which time it appeared to him that his knowledge of medicine would be much improved by foreign travel. There was Albinus, for example, "the great professor of Leyden," as he wrote to the credulous uncle, from

whom he would doubtless learn much. When, having got another twenty pounds for travelling expenses, he did reach Leyden (1754), he mentioned Gaubius, the chemical professor. Gaubius is also a good name. That his intercourse with these learned persons, and the serious nature of his studies, were not incompatible with a little light relaxation in the way of gambling is not impossible. On one occasion, it is said, he was so lucky that he came to a fellow-student with his pockets full of money; and was induced to resolve never to play again—a resolution broken about as soon as made. Of course he lost all his winnings, and more; and had to borrow a trifling sum to get himself out of the place. Then an incident occurs which is highly characteristic of the better side of Goldsmith's nature. He had just got this money, and was about to leave Leyden, when, as Mr. Forster writes, "he passed a florist's garden on his return, and seeing some rare and high-priced flower, which his uncle Contarine, an enthusiast in such things, had often spoken and been in search of, he ran in without other thought than of immediate pleasure to his kindest friend, bought a parcel of the roots, and sent them off to Ireland." He had a guinea in his pocket when he started on the grand tour.

Of this notable period in Goldsmith's life (1755–6) very little is known, though a good deal has been guessed. A minute record of all the personal adventures that befell the wayfarer as he trudged from country to country, a diary of the odd humours and fancies that must have occurred to him in his solitary pilgrimages, would be of quite inestimable value; but even the letters that Goldsmith wrote home from time to time are lost; while *The*

Traveller consists chiefly of a series of philosophical reflections on the government of various states, more likely to have engaged the attention of a Fleet-street author, living in an atmosphere of books, than to have occupied the mind of a tramp anxious about his supper and his night's lodging. Boswell says he "disputed" his way through Europe. It is much more probable that he begged his way through Europe. The romantic version, which has been made the subject of many a charming picture, is that he was entertained by the peasantry whom he had delighted with his playing on the flute. It is quite probable that Goldsmith, whose imagination had been captivated by the story of how Baron von Holberg had as a young man really passed through France, Germany, and Holland in this Orpheus-like manner, may have put a flute in his pocket when he left Leyden; but it is far from safe to assume, as is generally done, that Goldsmith was himself the hero of the adventures described in Chapter xx. of the *Vicar of Wakefield*. It is the more to be regretted that we have no authentic record of these devious wanderings, that by this time Goldsmith had acquired, as is shown in other letters, a polished, easy, and graceful style, with a very considerable faculty of humorous observation. Those ingenious letters to his uncle (they usually included a little hint about money) were, in fact, a trifle too literary both in substance and in form; we could even now, looking at them with a pardonable curiosity, have spared a little of their formal antithesis for some more precise information about the writer and his surroundings.

The strangest thing about this strange journey all over

Europe was the failure of Goldsmith to pick up even a common and ordinary acquaintance with the familiar facts of natural history. The ignorance on this point of the author of the *Animated Nature* was a constant subject of jest among Goldsmith's friends. They declared he could not tell the difference between any two sorts of barndoor fowl until he saw them cooked and on the table. But it may be said prematurely here that, even when he is wrong as to his facts or his sweeping generalisations, one is inclined to forgive him on account of the quaint gracefulness and point of his style. When Mr. Burchell says, "This rule seems to extend even to other animals: the little vermin race are ever treacherous, cruel, and cowardly, whilst those endowed with strength and power are generous, brave, and gentle," we scarcely stop to reflect that the merlin, which is not much bigger than a thrush, has an extraordinary courage and spirit, while the lion, if all stories be true, is, unless when goaded by hunger, an abject skulker. Elsewhere, indeed, in the *Animated Nature*, Goldsmith gives credit to the smaller birds for a good deal of valour, and then goes on to say, with a charming freedom,—"But their contentions are sometimes of a gentler nature. Two male birds shall strive in song till, after a long struggle, the loudest shall entirely silence the other. During these contentions the female sits an attentive silent auditor, and often rewards the loudest songster with her company during the season." Yet even this description of the battle of the bards, with the queen of love as arbiter, is scarcely so amusing as his happy-go-lucky notions with regard to the variability of species. The philosopher, flute in hand, who went

wandering from the canals of Holland to the ice-ribbed falls of the Rhine, may have heard from time to time that contest between singing-birds which he so imaginatively describes; but it was clearly the Fleet-Street author, living among books, who arrived at the conclusion that intermarriage of species is common among small birds and rare among big birds. Quoting some lines of Addison's which express the belief that birds are a virtuous race—that the nightingale, for example, does not covet the wife of his neighbour, the blackbird —Goldsmith goes on to observe,—"But whatever may be the poet's opinion, the probability is against this fidelity among the smaller tenants of the grove. The great birds are much more true to their species than these; and, of consequence, the varieties among them are more few. Of the ostrich, the cassowary, and the eagle, there are but few species; and no arts that man can use could probably induce them to mix with each other."

What he did bring back from his foreign travels was a medical degree. Where he got it, and how he got it, are alike matters of pure conjecture; but it is extremely improbable that—whatever he might have been willing to write home from Padua or Louvain, in order to coax another remittance from his Irish friends—he would afterwards, in the presence of such men as Johnson, Burke, and Reynolds, wear sham honours. It is much more probable that, on his finding those supplies from Ireland running ominously short, the philosophic vagabond determined to prove to his correspondents that he was really at work somewhere, instead of merely idling away his time, begging or

borrowing the wherewithal to pass him from town to town. That he did see something of the foreign universities is evident from his own writings; there are touches of description here and there which he could not well have got from books. With this degree, and with such book-learning and such knowledge of nature and human nature as he had chosen or managed to pick up during all those years, he was now called upon to begin life for himself. The Irish supplies stopped altogether. His letters were left unanswered. And so Goldsmith somehow or other got back to London (February 1, 1756), and had to cast about for some way of earning his daily bread.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY STRUGGLES.—HACK-WRITING.

HERE ensued a very dark period in his life. He was alone in London, without friends, without money, without introductions; his appearance was the reverse of prepossessing; and, even despite that medical degree and his acquaintance with the learned Albinus and the learned Gaubius, he had practically nothing of any value to offer for sale in the great labour-market of the world. How he managed to live at all is a mystery: it is certain that he must have endured a great deal of want; and one may well sympathise with so gentle and sensitive a creature reduced to such straits, without inquiring too curiously into the causes of his misfortunes. If, on the one hand, we cannot accuse society, or Christianity, or the English government of injustice and cruelty because Goldsmith had gambled away his chances and was now called on to pay the penalty, on the other hand, we had better, before blaming Goldsmith himself, inquire into the origin of those defects of character which produced such results. As this would involve an *excursus* into the controversy between Necessity and Free-will, probably most people would rather leave it alone. It may

safely be said in any case that, while Goldsmith's faults and follies, of which he himself had to suffer the consequences, are patent enough, his character on the whole was distinctly a lovable one. Goldsmith was his own enemy, and everybody else's friend: that is not a serious indictment, as things go. He was quite well aware of his weaknesses; and he was also—it may be hinted—aware of the good-nature which he put forward as condonation. If some foreigner were to ask how it is that so thoroughly a commercial people as the English are—strict in the acknowledgment and payment of debt—should have always betrayed a sneaking fondness for the character of the good-humoured scapegrace whose hand is in everybody's pocket, and who throws away other people's money with the most charming air in the world, Goldsmith might be pointed to as one of many literary teachers whose own circumstances were not likely to make them severe censors of the Charles Surfaces, or lenient judges of the Joseph Surfaces of the world. Be merry while you may; let to-morrow take care of itself; share your last guinea with any one, even if the poor drones of society—the butcher, and baker, and milkman with his score—have to suffer; do anything you like, so long as you keep the heart warm. All this is a delightful philosophy. It has its moments of misery—its periods of reaction—but it has its moments of high delight. When we are invited to contemplate the "evil destinies of men of letters," we ought to be shown the flood-tides as well as the ebb-tides. The tavern gaiety; the brand new coat and lace and sword; the midnight frolics, with jolly companions every one—these, however brief and inter-

mittent, should not be wholly left out of the picture. Of course it is very dreadful to hear of poor Boyse lying in bed with nothing but a blanket over him, and with his arms thrust through two holes in the blanket, so that he could write—perhaps a continuation of his poem on the *Deity*. But then we should be shown Boyse when he was spending the money collected by Dr. Johnson to get the poor scribbler's clothes out of pawn; and we should also be shown him, with his hands through the holes in the blanket, enjoying the mushrooms and truffles on which, as a little garniture for "his last scrap of beef," he had just laid out his last half-guinea.

There were but few truffles—probably there was but little beef—for Goldsmith during this sombre period. "His threadbare coat, his uncouth figure, and Hibernian dialect caused him to meet with repeated refusals." But at length he got some employment in a chemist's shop, and this was a start. Then he tried practising in a small way on his own account in Southwark. Here he made the acquaintance of a printer's workman; and through him he was engaged as corrector of the press in the establishment of Mr. Samuel Richardson. Being so near to literature, he caught the infection; and naturally began with a tragedy. This tragedy was shown to the author of *Clarissa Harlowe;* but it only went the way of many similar first inspiritings of the Muse. Then Goldsmith drifted to Peckham, where we find him (1757) installed as usher at Dr. Milner's school. Goldsmith as usher has been the object of much sympathy; and he would certainly deserve it, if we are to assume that his description of an usher's position in the *Bee*, and in George Primrose's advice to his cousin, was a full and

accurate description of his life at Peckham. "Browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys"—if that was his life, he was much to be pitied. But we cannot believe it. The Milners were exceedingly kind to Goldsmith. It was at the intercession of young Milner, who had been his fellow-student at Edinburgh, that Goldsmith got the situation, which at all events kept him out of the reach of immediate want. It was through the Milners that he was introduced to Griffiths, who gave him a chance of trying a literary career—as a hack-writer of reviews and so forth. When, having got tired of that, Goldsmith was again floating vaguely on the waves of chance, where did he find a harbour but in that very school at Peckham? And we have the direct testimony of the youngest of Dr. Milner's daughters, that this Irish usher of theirs was a remarkably cheerful, and even facetious person, constantly playing tricks and practical jokes, amusing the boys by telling stories and by performances on the flute, living a careless life, and always in advance of his salary. Any beggars, or group of children, even the very boys who played back practical jokes on him, were welcome to a share of what small funds he had; and we all know how Mrs. Milner good-naturedly said one day, "You had better, Mr. Goldsmith, let me keep your money for you, as I do for some of the young gentlemen;" and how he answered with much simplicity, "In truth, Madam, there is equal need." With Goldsmith's love of approbation and extreme sensitiveness he no doubt suffered deeply from many slights, now as at other times; but what we know of his life in the Peckham school does not incline us to

believe that it was an especially miserable period of his existence. His abundant cheerfulness does not seem to have at any time deserted him; and what with tricks, and jokes, and playing of the flute, the dull routine of instructing the unruly young gentlemen at Dr. Milner's was got through somehow.

When Goldsmith left the Peckham school to try hack-writing in Paternoster Row, he was going further to fare worse. Griffiths the bookseller, when he met Goldsmith at Dr. Milner's dinner-table and invited him to become a reviewer, was doing a service to the English nation—for it was in this period of machine-work that Goldsmith discovered that happy faculty of literary expression that led to the composition of his masterpieces—but he was doing little immediate service to Goldsmith.

The newly-captured hack was boarded and lodged at Griffiths' house in Paternoster Row (1757); he was to have a small salary in consideration of remorselessly constant work; and—what was the hardest condition of all—he was to have his writings revised by Mrs. Griffiths. Mr. Forster justly remarks that though at last Goldsmith had thus become a man-of-letters, he "had gratified no passion and attained no object of ambition." He had taken to literature, as so many others have done, merely as a last resource. And if it is true that literature at first treated Goldsmith harshly, made him work hard, and gave him comparatively little for what he did, at least it must be said that his experience was not a singular one. Mr. Forster says that literature was at that time in a transition state: "The patron was gone, and the public had not come." But when Goldsmith began to do better than hack-work, he found a public

speedily enough. If, as Lord Macaulay computes, Goldsmith received in the last seven years of his life what was equivalent to £5,600 of our money, even the villain booksellers cannot be accused of having starved him. At the outset of his literary career he received no large sums, for he had achieved no reputation; but he got the market-rate for his work. We have around us at this moment plenty of hacks who do not earn much more than their board and lodging with a small salary.

For the rest, we have no means of knowing whether Goldsmith got through his work with ease or with difficulty; but it is obvious, looking over the reviews which he is believed to have written for Griffiths' magazine, that he readily acquired the professional critic's airs of superiority, along with a few tricks of the trade, no doubt taught him by Griffiths. Several of these reviews, for example, are merely epitomes of the contents of the books reviewed, with some vague suggestion that the writer might, if he had been less careful, have done worse, and, if he had been more careful, might have done better. Who does not remember how the philosophic vagabond was taught to become a cognoscento? "The whole secret consisted in a strict adherence to two rules: the one always to observe that the picture might have been better if the painter had taken more pains; and the other to praise the works of Pietro Perugino." It is amusing to observe the different estimates formed of the function of criticism by Goldsmith the critic, and by Goldsmith the author. Goldsmith, sitting at Griffiths' desk, naturally magnifies his office, and announces his opinion that "to direct our taste, and conduct the poet up to perfection, has ever

been the true critic's province." But Goldsmith the author, when he comes to inquire into the existing state of Polite Learning in Europe, finds in criticism not a help but a danger. It is "the natural destroyer of polite learning." And again, in the *Citizen of the World*, he exclaims against the pretensions of the critic. "If any choose to be critics, it is but saying they are critics; and from that time forward they become invested with full power and authority over every caitiff who aims at their instruction or entertainment."

This at least may be said, that in these early essays contributed to the *Monthly Review* there is much more of Goldsmith the critic than of Goldsmith the author. They are somewhat laboured performances. They are almost devoid of the sly and delicate humour that afterwards marked Goldsmith's best prose work. We find throughout his trick of antithesis; but here it is forced and formal, whereas afterwards he lent to this habit of writing the subtle surprise of epigram. They have the true manner of authority, nevertheless. He says of Home's *Douglas*—"Those parts of nature, and that rural simplicity with which the author was, perhaps, best acquainted, are not unhappily described; and hence we are led to conjecture, that a more universal knowledge of nature will probably increase his powers of description." If the author had written otherwise, he would have written differently; had he known more, he would not have been so ignorant; the tragedy is a tragedy, but why did not the author make it a comedy? —this sort of criticism has been heard of even in our own day. However, Goldsmith pounded away at his newly-found work, under the eye of the exacting book-

seller and his learned wife. We find him dealing with Scandinavian (here called Celtic) mythology, though he does not adventure on much comment of his own; then he engages Smollett's *History of England*, but mostly in the way of extract; anon we find him reviewing *A Journal of Eight Days' Journey*, by Jonas Hanway, of whom Johnson said that he made some reputation by travelling abroad, and lost it all by travelling at home. Then again we find him writing a disquisition on *Some Enquiries concerning the First Inhabitants, Language, Religion, Learning, and Letters of Europe*, by a Mr. Wise, who, along with his critic, appears to have got into hopeless confusion in believing Basque and Armorican to be the remains of the same ancient language. The last phrase of a note appended to this review by Goldsmith probably indicates his own humble estimate of his work at this time. "It is more our business," he says, "to exhibit the opinions of the learned than to controvert them." In fact he was employed to boil down books for people who did not wish to spend more on literature than the price of a magazine. Though he was new to the trade, it is probable he did it as well as any other.

At the end of five months, Goldsmith and Griffiths quarrelled and separated. Griffiths said Goldsmith was idle; Goldsmith said Griffiths was impertinent; probably the editorial supervision exercised by Mrs. Griffiths had something to do with the dire contention. From Paternoster Row Goldsmith removed to a garret in Fleet Street; had his letters addressed to a coffee-house; and apparently supported himself by further hack-work, his connection with Griffiths not being quite severed. Then he drifted back to Peckham again; and was once more

installed as usher, Dr. Milner being in especial want of an assistant at this time. Goldsmith's lingering about the gates of literature had not inspired him with any great ambition to enter the enchanted land. But at the same time he thought he saw in literature a means by which a little ready money might be made, in order to help him on to something more definite and substantial; and this goal was now put before him by Dr. Milner, in the shape of a medical appointment on the Coromandel coast. It was in the hope of obtaining this appointment, that he set about composing that *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*, which is now interesting to us as the first of his more ambitious works. As the book grew under his hands, he began to cast about for subscribers; and from the Fleet-Street coffee-house—he had again left the Peckham school—he addressed to his friends and relatives a series of letters of the most charming humour, which might have drawn subscriptions from a millstone. To his brother-in-law, Mr. Hodson, he sent a glowing account of the great fortune in store for him on the Coromandel coast. "The salary is but trifling," he writes, "namely £100 per annum, but the other advantages, if a person be prudent, are considerable. The practice of the place, if I am rightly informed, generally amounts to not less than £1,000 per annum, for which the appointed physician has an exclusive privilege. This, with the advantages resulting from trade, and the high interest which money bears, viz. £20 per cent., are the inducements which persuade me to undergo the fatigues of sea, the dangers of war, and the still greater dangers of the climate; which induce me to leave a place where I am every day

gaining friends and esteem, and where I might enjoy all the conveniences of life."

The surprising part of this episode in Goldsmith's life is that he did really receive the appointment; in fact he was called upon to pay £10 for the appointment-warrant. In this emergency he went to the proprietor of the *Critical Review*, the rival of the *Monthly*, and obtained some money for certain anonymous work which need not be mentioned in detail here. He also moved into another garret, this time in Green-Arbour Court, Fleet Street, in a wilderness of slums. The Coromandel project, however, on which so many hopes had been built, fell through. No explanation of the collapse could be got from either Goldsmith himself, or from Dr. Milner. Mr. Forster suggests that Goldsmith's inability to raise money for his outfit may have been made the excuse for transferring the appointment to another; and that is probable enough; but it is also probable that the need for such an excuse was based on the discovery that Goldsmith was not properly qualified for the post. And this seems the more likely, that Goldsmith immediately afterwards resolved to challenge examination at Surgeons' Hall. He undertook to write four articles for the *Monthly Review;* Griffiths became surety to a tailor for a fine suit of clothes; and thus equipped, Goldsmith presented himself at Surgeons' Hall. He only wanted to be passed as hospital mate; but even that modest ambition was unfulfilled. He was found not qualified; and returned, with his fine clothes, to his Fleet-Street den. He was now thirty years of age (1758); and had found no definite occupation in the world.

CHAPTER V.

BEGINNING OF AUTHORSHIP.—THE BEE.

DURING the period that now ensued, and amid much quarrelling with Griffiths and hack-writing for the *Critical Review*, Goldsmith managed to get his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* completed; and it is from the publication of that work, on the 2nd of April, 1759, that we may date the beginning of Goldsmith's career as an author. The book was published anonymously; but Goldsmith was not at all anxious to disclaim the parentage of his first-born; and in Grub Street and its environs, at least, the authorship of the book was no secret. Moreover there was that in it which was likely to provoke the literary tribe to plenty of fierce talking. The *Enquiry* is neither more nor less than an endeavour to prove that criticism has in all ages been the deadly enemy of art and literature; coupled with an appeal to authors to draw their inspiration from nature rather than from books, and varied here and there by a gentle sigh over the loss of that patronage, in the sunshine of which men of genius were wont to bask. Goldsmith, not having been an author himself, could not have suffered much at the

hands of the critics; so that it is not to be supposed that personal feeling dictated this fierce onslaught on the whole tribe of critics, compilers, and commentators. They are represented to us as rank weeds, growing up to choke all manifestations of true art. "Ancient learning," we are told at the outset, "may be distinguished into three periods: its commencement, or the age of poets; its maturity, or the age of philosophers; and its decline, or the age of critics." Then our guide carries us into the dark ages; and, with lantern in hand, shows us the creatures swarming there in the sluggish pools—"commentators, compilers, polemic divines, and intricate metaphysicians." We come to Italy: look at the affectations with which the Virtuosi and Filosofi have enchained the free spirit of poetry. "Poetry is no longer among them an imitation of what we see, but of what a visionary might wish. The zephyr breathes the most exquisite perfume; the trees wear eternal verdure; fawns, and dryads, and hamadryads, stand ready to fan the sultry shepherdess, who has forgot, indeed, the prettiness with which Guarini's shepherdesses have been reproached, but is so simple and innocent as often to have no meaning. Happy country, where the pastoral age begins to revive!—where the wits even of Rome are united into a rural group of nymphs and swains, under the appellation of modern Arcadians!—where in the midst of porticoes, processions, and cavalcades, abbés turned shepherds and shepherdesses without sheep indulge their innocent *divertimenti!*"

In Germany the ponderous volumes of the commentators next come in for animadversion; and here we

find an epigram, the quaint simplicity of which is peculiarly characteristic of Goldsmith. "Were angels to write books," he remarks, "they never would write folios." But Germany gets credit for the money spent by her potentates on learned institutions; and it is perhaps England that is delicately hinted at in these words: "Had the fourth part of the immense sum above-mentioned been given in proper rewards to genius, in some neighbouring countries, it would have rendered the name of the donor immortal, and added to the real interests of society." Indeed, when we come to England, we find that men of letters are in a bad way, owing to the prevalence of critics, the tyranny of booksellers, and the absence of patrons. "The author, when unpatronized by the great, has naturally recourse to the bookseller. There cannot perhaps be imagined a combination more prejudicial to taste than this. It is the interest of the one to allow as little for writing, and of the other to write as much as possible. Accordingly, tedious compilations and periodical magazines are the result of their joint endeavours. In these circumstances the author bids adieu to fame, writes for bread, and for that only. Imagination is seldom called in. He sits down to address the venal muse with the most phlegmatic apathy; and, as we are told of the Russian, courts his mistress by falling asleep in her lap. His reputation never spreads in a wider circle than that of the trade, who generally value him, not for the fineness of his compositions, but the quantity he works off in a given time.

"A long habit of writing for bread thus turns the

ambition of every author at last into avarice. He finds that he has written many years, that the public are scarcely acquainted even with his name; he despairs of applause, and turns to profit, which invites him. He finds that money procures all those advantages, that respect, and that ease which he vainly expected from fame. Thus the man who, under the protection of the great, might have done honour to humanity, when only patronized by the bookseller, becomes a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press."

Nor was he afraid to attack the critics of his own day, though he knew that the two Reviews for which he had recently been writing would have something to say about his own *Enquiry*. This is how he disposes of the *Critical* and the *Monthly*: "We have two literary Reviews in London, with critical newspapers and magazines without number. The compilers of these resemble the commoners of Rome; they are all for levelling property, not by increasing their own, but by diminishing that of others. The man who has any good-nature in his disposition must, however, be somewhat displeased to see [illegible] reputations often the spontaneous growth of ignorance, — to see, by one false pleasantry, the future peace of a worthy man's life disturbed, and this only because he has unsuccessfully attempted to instruct or amuse us. Though ill-nature is far from being wit, yet it is generally laughed at as such. The critic enjoys the triumph, and ascribes to his parts what is only due to his effrontery. I fire with indignation, when I see persons wholly destitute of education and genius indent to the press, and thus turn book-makers, adding to the sin of criticism the sin of ignorance also;

whose trade is a bad one, and who are bad workmen in the trade." Indeed there was a good deal of random hitting in the *Enquiry*, which was sure to provoke resentment. Why, for example, should he have gone out of his way to insult the highly respectable class of people who excel in mathematical studies? "This seems a science," he observes, "to which the meanest intellects are equal. I forget who it is that says 'All men might understand mathematics if they would.'" There was also in the first edition of the *Enquiry* a somewhat ungenerous attack on stage-managers, actors, actresses, and theatrical things in general; but this was afterwards wisely excised. It is not to be wondered at that, on the whole, the *Enquiry* should have been severely handled in certain quarters. Smollett, who reviewed it in the *Critical Review*, appears to have kept his temper pretty well for a Scotchman; but Kenrick, a hack employed by Griffiths to maltreat the book in the *Monthly Review*, flourished his bludgeon in a brave manner. The coarse personalities and malevolent insinuations of this bully no doubt hurt Goldsmith considerably; but, as we look at them now, they are only remarkable for their dulness. [illegible] had had another Goldsmith to reply to Goldsmith, the retort would have been better worth reading: one can imagine the playful sarcasm that would have been dealt out to this new writer, who, in the very act of protesting against criticism, proclaimed himself a critic. But Goldsmiths are not always to be had when wanted; while Kenricks can be bought at any moment for a guinea or two a head.

Goldsmith had not chosen literature as the occupation

of his life; he had only fallen back on it, when other projects failed. But it is quite possible that now, as he began to take up some slight position as an author, the old ambition of distinguishing himself—which had flickered before his imagination from time to time—began to enter into his calculations along with the more pressing business of earning a livelihood. And he was soon to have an opportunity of appealing to a wider public than could have been expected for that erudite treatise on the arts of Europe. Mr. Wilkie, a bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, proposed to start a weekly magazine, price threepence, to contain essays, short stories, letters on the topics of the day, and so forth, more or less after the manner of the *Spectator*. He asked Goldsmith to become sole contributor. Here, indeed, was a very good opening; for, although there were many magazines in the field, the public had just then a fancy for literature in small doses; while Goldsmith, in entering into the competition, would not be hampered by the dulness of collaborateurs. He closed with Wilkie's offer; and on the 6th of October, 1759, appeared the first number of the *Bee*.

For us now there is a curious autobiographical interest in the opening sentences of the first number; but surely even the public of the day must have imagined that the new writer who was now addressing them, was not to be confounded with the common herd of magazine-hacks. What could be more delightful than this odd mixture of modesty, humour, and an anxious desire to please?—"There is not, perhaps, a more whimsically dismal figure in nature than a man of real modesty, who assumes an air of impudence—who, while his heart beats with

anxiety, studies ease and affects good-humour. In this situation, however, a periodical writer often finds himself upon his first attempt to address the public in form. All his power of pleasing is damped by solicitude, and his cheerfulness dashed with apprehension. Impressed with the terrors of the tribunal before which he is going to appear, his natural humour turns to pertness, and for real wit he is obliged to substitute vivacity. His first publication draws a crowd; they part dissatisfied; and the author, never more to be indulged with a favourable hearing, is left to condemn the indelicacy of his own address or their want of discernment. For my part, as I was never distinguished for address, and have often even blundered in making my bow, such bodings as these had like to have totally repressed my ambition. I was at a loss whether to give the public specious promises, or give none; whether to be merry or sad on this solemn occasion. If I should decline all merit, it was too probable the hasty reader might have taken me at my word. If, on the other hand, like labourers in the magazine trade, I had, with modest impudence, humbly presumed to promise an epitome of all the good things that ever were said or written, this might have disgusted those readers I most desire to please. Had I been merry, I might have been censured as vastly low; and had I been sorrowful, I might have been left to mourn in solitude and silence; in short, whichever way I turned, nothing presented but prospects of terror, despair, chandlers' shops, and waste paper."

And it is just possible that if Goldsmith had kept to this vein of familiar *causerie*, the public might in time have been attracted by its quaintness. But no doubt

Mr. Wilkie would have stared aghast; and so we find Goldsmith, as soon as his introductory bow is made, setting seriously about the business of magazine-making. Very soon, however, both Mr. Wilkie and his editor perceived that the public had not been taken by their venture. The chief cause of the failure, as it appears to any one who looks over the magazine now, would seem to be the lack of any definite purpose. There was no marked feature to arrest public attention, while many things were discarded on which the popularity of other periodicals had been based. There was no scandal to appeal to the key-hole and back-door element in human nature; there were no libels and gross personalities to delight the mean and envious; there were no fine airs of fashion to charm milliners anxious to know how the great talked, and posed, and dressed; and there was no solemn and pompous erudition to impress the minds of those serious and sensible people who buy literature as they buy butter, by its weight. At the beginning of No. IV. he admits that the new magazine has not been a success; and, in doing so, returns to that vein of whimsical, personal humour with which he had started: "Were I to measure the merit of my present undertaking by its success or the rapidity of its sale, I might be led to form conclusions by no means favourable to the pride of an author. Should I estimate my fame by its extent, every newspaper and magazine would leave me far behind. Their fame is diffused in a very wide circle—that of some as far as Islington, and some yet farther still; while mine, I sincerely believe, has hardly travelled beyond the sound of Bow Bell; and, while the works of others fly

like unpinioned swans, I find my own move as heavily as a new-plucked goose. Still, however, I have as much pride as they who have ten times as many readers. It is impossible to repeat all the agreeable delusions in which a disappointed author is apt to find comfort. I conclude, that what my reputation wants in extent is made up by its solidity. *Minus juvat gloria lata quam magna.* I have great satisfaction in considering the delicacy and discernment of those readers I have, and in ascribing my want of popularity to the ignorance or inattention of those I have not. All the world may forsake an author, but vanity will never forsake him. Yet, notwithstanding so sincere a confession, I was once induced to show my indignation against the public, by discontinuing my endeavours to please; and was bravely resolved, like Raleigh, to vex them by burning my manuscript in a passion. Upon recollection, however, I considered what set or body of people would be displeased at my rashness. The sun, after so sad an accident, might shine next morning as bright as usual; men might laugh and sing the next day, and transact business as before, and not a single creature feel any regret but myself."

Goldsmith was certainly more at home in this sort of writing, than in gravely lecturing people against the vice of gambling; in warning tradesmen how ill it became them to be seen at races; in demonstrating that justice is a higher virtue than generosity; and in proving that the avaricious are the true benefactors of society. But even as he confesses the failure of his new magazine, he seems determined to show the public what sort of writer this is, whom as yet they have

not regarded too favourably. It is in No. IV. of the *Bee* that the famous *City Night Piece* occurs. No doubt that strange little fragment of description was the result of some sudden and aimless fancy, striking the occupant of the lonely garret in the middle of the night. The present tense, which he seldom used—and the abuse of which is one of the detestable vices of modern literature—adds to the mysterious solemnity of the recital :—

"The clock has just struck two, the expiring taper rises and sinks in the socket, the watchman forgets the hour in slumber, the laborious and the happy are at rest, and nothing wakes but meditation, guilt, revelry, and despair. The drunkard once more fills the destroying bowl, the robber walks his midnight round, and the suicide lifts his guilty arm against his own sacred person.

"Let me no longer waste the night over the page of antiquity or the sallies of contemporary genius, but pursue the solitary walk, where Vanity, ever changing, but a few hours past walked before me—where she kept up the pageant, and now, like a froward child, seems hushed with her own importunities.

"What a gloom hangs all around! The dying lamp feebly emits a yellow gleam; no sound is heard but of the chiming clock, or the distant watch-dog. All the bustle of human pride is forgotten; an hour like this may well display the emptiness of human vanity.

"There will come a time, when this temporary solitude may be made continual, and the city itself, like its inhabitants, fade away, and leave a desert in its room.

"What cities, as great as this, have once triumphed in

existence, had their victories as great, joy as just and as unbounded; and, with short-sighted presumption, promised themselves immortality! Posterity can hardly trace the situation of some; the sorrowful traveller wanders over the awful ruins of others; and, as he beholds, he learns wisdom, and feels the transience of every sublunary possession.

"'Here,' he cries, 'stood their citadel, now grown over with weeds; there their senate-house, but now the haunt of every noxious reptile; temples and theatres stood here, now only an undistinguished heap of ruin. They are fallen, for luxury and avarice first made them feeble. The rewards of the state were conferred on amusing, and not on useful, members of society. Their riches and opulence invited the invaders, who, though at first repulsed, returned again, conquered by perseverance, and at last swept the defendants into undistinguished destruction.'"

CHAPTER VI.

PERSONAL TRAITS.

The foregoing extracts will sufficiently show what were the chief characteristics of Goldsmith's writing at this time—the grace and ease of style, a gentle and sometimes pathetic thoughtfulness, and, above all, when he speaks in the first person, a delightful vein of humorous self-disclosure. Moreover, these qualities, if they were not immediately profitable to the booksellers, were beginning to gain for him the recognition of some of the well-known men of the day. Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore, had made his way to the miserable garret of the poor author. Smollett, whose novels Goldsmith preferred to his History, was anxious to secure his services as a contributor to the forthcoming *British Magazine*. Burke had spoken of the pleasure given him by Goldsmith's review of the *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. But, to crown all, the great Cham himself sought out this obscure author, who had on several occasions spoken with reverence and admiration of his works; and so began what is perhaps the most interesting literary friendship on record. At what precise date Johnson first made Goldsmith's acquaintance, is not

known; Mr. Forster is right in assuming that they had met before the supper in Wine-Office Court, at which Mr. Percy was present. It is a thousand pities that Boswell had not by this time made his appearance in London. Johnson, Goldsmith, and all the rest of them are only ghosts until the pertinacious young laird of Auchinleck comes on the scene to give them colour, and life, and form. It is odd enough that the very first remarks of Goldsmith's which Boswell jotted down in his notebook, should refer to Johnson's systematic kindness towards the poor and wretched. "He had increased my admiration of the goodness of Johnson's heart by incidental remarks in the course of conversation, such as, when I mentioned Mr. Levett, whom he entertained under his roof, 'He is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnson'; and when I wondered that he was very kind to a man of whom I had heard a very bad character, 'He is now become miserable, and that ensures the protection of Johnson.'"

For the rest, Boswell was not well-disposed towards Goldsmith, whom he regarded with a jealousy equal to his admiration of Johnson; but it is probable that his description of the personal appearance of the awkward and ungainly Irishman is in the main correct. And here also it may be said that Boswell's love of truth and accuracy compelled him to make this admission: ("It has been generally circulated and believed that he (Goldsmith) was a mere fool in conversation; but, in truth, this has been greatly exaggerated.") On this exaggeration—seeing that the contributor to the *British Magazine* and the *Public Ledger* was now becoming better

known among his fellow authors—a word or two may fitly be said here. It pleased Goldsmith's contemporaries, who were not all of them celebrated for their ready wit, to regard him as a hopeless and incurable fool, who by some strange chance could produce literature, the merits of which he could not himself understand. To Horace Walpole we owe the phrase which describes Goldsmith as an "inspired idiot." Innumerable stories are told of Goldsmith's blunders; of his forced attempts to shine in conversation; of poor Poll talking nonsense, when all the world was wondering at the beauty of his writing. In one case we are told he was content to admit, when dictated to, that this, and not that, was what he really had meant in a particular phrase. Now there can be no question that Goldsmith, conscious of his pitted face, his brogue, and his ungainly figure, was exceedingly nervous and sensitive in society, and was anxious, as such people mostly are, to cover his shyness by an appearance of ease, if not even of swagger; and there can be as little question that he occasionally did and said very awkward and blundering things. But our Japanese friend, whom we mentioned in our opening pages, looking through the record that is preserved to us of those blunders which are supposed to be most conclusive as to this aspect of Goldsmith's character, would certainly stare. "Good heavens," he would cry, "did men ever live who were so thick-headed as not to see the humour of this or that 'blunder'; or were they so beset with the notion that Goldsmith was only a fool, that they must needs be blind?" Take one well-known instance. He goes to France with Mrs. Horneck and her two

daughters, the latter very handsome young ladies. At Lille the two girls and Goldsmith are standing at the window of the hotel, overlooking the square in which are some soldiers; and naturally the beautiful young Englishwomen attract some attention. Thereupon Goldsmith turns indignantly away, remarking that elsewhere he also has his admirers. Now what surgical instrument was needed to get this harmless little joke into any sane person's head? Boswell may perhaps be pardoned for pretending to take the incident *au sérieux;* for as has just been said, in his profound adoration of Johnson, he was devoured by jealousy of Goldsmith; but that any other mortal should have failed to see what was meant by this little bit of humorous flattery is almost incredible. No wonder that one of the sisters afterwards referring to this "playful jest," should have expressed her astonishment at finding it put down as a proof of Goldsmith's envious disposition. But even after that disclaimer, we find Mr. Croker, as quoted by Mr. Forster, solemnly doubting "whether the vexation so seriously exhibited by Goldsmith was real or assumed"!

Of course this is an extreme case; but there are others very similar. ("He affected," says Hawkins, "Johnson's style and manner of conversation, and, when he had uttered, as he often would, a laboured sentence, so tumid as to be scarce intelligible, would ask if that was not truly Johnsonian?") Is it not truly dismal to find such an utterance coming from a presumably reasonable human being? It is not to be wondered at that Goldsmith grew shy—and in some cases had to ward off the acquaintance of certain of his neighbours as being too intrusive—if he ran the risk of having his odd and grave

humours so densely mistranslated. The fact is this, that Goldsmith was possessed of a very subtle quality of humour, which is at all times rare, but which is perhaps more frequently to be found in Irishmen than among other folks. It consists in the satire of the pretence and pomposities of others by means of a sort of exaggerated and playful self-depreciation. It is a most delicate and most delightful form of humour; but it is very apt to be misconstrued by the dull. Who can doubt that Goldsmith was good-naturedly laughing at himself, his own plain face, his vanity, and his blunders, when he professed to be jealous of the admiration excited by the Miss Hornecks; when he gravely drew attention to the splendid colours of his coat; or when he no less gravely informed a company of his friends that he had heard a very good story, but would not repeat it, because they would be sure to miss the point of it?

This vein of playful and sarcastic self-depreciation is continually cropping up in his essay writing, as, for example, in the passage already quoted from No. IV. of the *Bee*: "I conclude, that what my reputation wants in extent, is made up by its solidity. *Minus juvat gloria lata quam magna.* I have great satisfaction in considering the delicacy and discernment of those readers I have, and in ascribing my want of popularity to the ignorance or inattention of those I have not." But here, no doubt, he remembers that he is addressing the world at large, which contains many foolish persons; and so, that the delicate raillery may not be mistaken, he immediately adds, "All the world may forsake an author, but vanity will never forsake

him." That he expected a quicker apprehension on the part of his intimates and acquaintances, and that he was frequently disappointed, seems pretty clear from those very stories of his "blunders." We may reasonably suspect, at all events, that Goldsmith was not quite so much of a fool as he looked; and it is far from improbable that when the ungainly Irishman was called in to make sport for the Philistines—and there were a good many Philistines in those days, if all stories be true—and when they imagined they had put him out of countenance, he was really standing aghast, and wondering how it could have pleased Providence to create such helpless stupidity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD.—BEAU NASH.

MEANWHILE, to return to his literary work, the *Citizen of the World* had grown out of his contributions to the *Public Ledger*, a daily newspaper started by Mr. Newbery, another bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard. Goldsmith was engaged to write for this paper two letters a week at a guinea a-piece; and these letters were, after a short time (1760), written in the character of a Chinese who had come to study European civilisation. It may be noted that Goldsmith had in the *Monthly Review*, in mentioning Voltaire's memoirs of French writers, quoted a passage about Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* as follows: "It is written in imitation of the *Siamese Letters* of Du Freny and of the *Turkish Spy*; but it is an imitation which shows what the originals should have been. The success their works met with was, for the most part, owing to the foreign air of their performances; the success of the *Persian Letters* arose from the delicacy of their satire. That satire which in the mouth of an Asiatic is poignant, would lose all its force when coming from an European." And it must certainly be said that the charm of the

"Our pursuer soon came up and joined us with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. 'My dear Drybone,' cries he, shaking my friend's hand, 'where have you been hiding this half a century? Positively I had fancied you were gone to cultivate matrimony and your estate in the country.' During the reply I had an opportunity of surveying the appearance of our new companion: his hat was pinched up with peculiar smartness; his looks were pale, thin, and sharp; round his neck he wore a broad black riband, and in his bosom a buckle studded with glass; his coat was trimmed with tarnished twist; he wore by his side a sword with a black hilt; and his stockings of silk, though newly washed, were grown yellow by long service. I was so much engaged with the peculiarity of his dress, that I attended only to the latter part of my friend's reply, in which he complimented Mr. Tibbs on the taste of his clothes and the bloom in his countenance. 'Pshaw, pshaw, Will,' cried the figure, 'no more of that, if you love me: you know I hate flattery, —on my soul I do; and yet, to be sure, an intimacy with the great will improve one's appearance, and a course of venison will fatten; and yet, faith, I despise the great as much as you do; but there are a great many damn'd honest fellows among them, and we must not quarrel with one half, because the other wants weeding. If they were all such as my Lord Mudler, one of the most good-natured creatures that ever squeezed a lemon, I should myself be among the number of their admirers. I was yesterday to dine at the Duchess of Piccadilly's. My lord was there. "Ned," says he to me, "Ned," says he, "I'll hold gold to silver,

I can tell you where you were poaching last night." "Poaching, my lord?" says I: "faith, you have missed already; for I staid at home and let the girls poach for me. That's my way: I take a fine woman as some animals do their prey—stand still, and, swoop, they fall into my mouth."' 'Ah, Tibbs, thou art a happy fellow,' cried my companion, with looks of infinite pity; 'I hope your fortune is as much improved as your understanding, in such company?' 'Improved!' replied the other: 'you shall know,—but let it go no farther—a great secret—five hundred a year to begin with—my lord's word of honour for it. His lordship took me down in his own chariot yesterday, and we had a *tête-à-tête* dinner in the country, where we talked of nothing else.'—'I fancy you forget, sir,' cried I; 'you told us but this moment of your dining yesterday in town.'—'Did I say so?' replied he, coolly; 'to be sure, if I said so, it was so. Dined in town! egad, now I do remember, I did dine in town; but I dined in the country too; for you must know, my boys, I ate two dinners. By the bye, I am grown as nice as the devil in my eating. I'll tell you a pleasant affair about that: we were a select party of us to dine at Lady Grogram's,—an affected piece, but let it go no farther—a secret.—Well, there happened to be no asafœtida in the sauce to a turkey, upon which, says I, I'll hold a thousand guineas, and say done, first, that—But, dear Drybone, you are an honest creature; lend me half-a-crown for a minute or two, or so, just till ——; but hearkee, ask me for it the next time we meet, or it may be twenty to one but I forget to pay you.'"

Returning from these performances to the author of them, we find him a busy man of letters, becoming more and more in request among the booksellers, and obtaining recognition among his fellow-writers. He had moved into better lodgings in Wine Office Court (1760-2); and it was here that he entertained at supper, as has already been mentioned, no less distinguished guests than Bishop, then Mr., Percy, and Dr., then Mr., Johnson. Every one has heard of the surprise of Percy, on calling for Johnson, to find the great Cham dressed with quite unusual smartness. On asking the cause of this "singular transformation," Johnson replied, "Why, sir, I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice; and I am desirous this night to show him a better example." That Goldsmith profited by this example—though the tailors did not—is clear enough. At times, indeed, he blossomed out into the splendours of a dandy; and laughed at himself for doing so. But whether he was in gorgeous or in mean attire, he remained the same sort of happy-go-lucky creature; working hard by fits and starts; continually getting money in advance from the booksellers; enjoying the present hour; and apparently happy enough when not pressed by debt. That he should have been thus pressed was no necessity of the case; at all events we need not on this score begin now to abuse the booksellers or the public of that day. We may dismiss once for all the oft-repeated charges of ingratitude and neglect. (When Goldsmith was writing those letters in the *Public Ledger*—with "pleasure and instruction for others," Mr. Forster says, "though at the cost of suffering to

himself"—he was receiving for them alone what would be equivalent in our day to £200 a year. No man can affirm that £200 a year is not amply sufficient for all the material wants of life. Of course there are fine things in the world that that amount of annual wage cannot purchase. It is a fine thing to sit on the deck of a yacht on a summer's day, and watch the far islands shining over the blue; it is a fine thing to drive four-in-hand to Ascot—if you can do it; it is a fine thing to cower breathless behind a rock and find a splendid stag coming slowly within sure range. But these things are not necessary to human happiness: it is possible to do without them and yet not "suffer." Even if Goldsmith had given half of his substance away to the poor, there was enough left to cover all the necessary wants of a human being; and if he chose so to order his affairs as to incur the suffering of debt, why, that was his own business, about which nothing further needs be said. It is to be suspected, indeed, that he did not care to practise those excellent maxims of prudence and frugality which he frequently preached; but the world is not much concerned about that now. If Goldsmith had received ten times as much money as the booksellers gave him, he would still have died in debt. And it is just possible that we may exaggerate Goldsmith's sensitiveness on this score. He had had a life-long familiarity with duns and borrowing; and seemed very contented when the exigency of the hour was tided over. An angry landlady is unpleasant, and an arrest is awkward; but in comes an opportune guinea, and the bottle of Madeira is opened forthwith.

In these rooms in Wine Office Court, and at the

suggestion or entreaty of Newbery, Goldsmith produced a good deal of miscellaneous writing—pamphlets, tracts, compilations, and what not—of a more or less marketable kind. It can only be surmised that by this time he may have formed some idea of producing a book not solely meant for the market, and that the characters in the *Vicar of Wakefield* were already engaging his attention; but the surmise becomes probable enough when we remember that his project of writing the *Traveller*, which was not published till 1764, had been formed as far back as 1755, while he was wandering aimlessly about Europe, and that a sketch of the poem was actually forwarded by him then to his brother Henry in Ireland. But in the meantime this hack-work, and the habits of life connected with it, began to tell on Goldsmith's health; and so, for a time, he left London (1762), and went to Tunbridge and then to Bath. It is scarcely possible that his modest fame had preceded him to the latter place of fashion; but it may be that the distinguished folk of the town received this friend of the great Dr. Johnson with some small measure of distinction; for we find that his next published work, *The Life of Richard Nash, Esq.*, is respectfully dedicated to the Right Worshipful the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of Bath. The Life of the recently deceased Master of Ceremonies was published anonymously (1762); but it was generally understood to be Goldsmith's; and indeed the secret of the authorship is revealed in every successive line. Among the minor writings of Goldsmith there is none more delightful than this: the mock-heroic gravity, the half-familiar contemptuous good-nature with which he composes

this Funeral March of a Marionette, are extremely whimsical and amusing. And then what an admirable picture we get of fashionable English society in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Bath and Nash were alike in the heyday of their glory—the fine ladies with their snuff-boxes, and their passion for play, and their extremely effective language when they got angry; young bucks come to flourish away their money, and gain by their losses the sympathy of the fair; sharpers on the look-out for guineas, and adventurers on the look-out for weak-minded heiresses; duchesses writing letters in the most doubtful English, and chairmen swearing at any one who dared to walk home on foot at night.

No doubt the Life of Beau Nash was a bookseller's book; and it was made as attractive as possible by the recapitulation of all sorts of romantic stories about Miss S——n, and Mr. C——e, and Captain K——g; but throughout we find the historian very much inclined to laugh at his hero, and only refraining now and again in order to record in serious language traits indicative of the real goodness of disposition of that fop and gambler. And the fine ladies and gentlemen, who lived in that atmosphere of scandal, and intrigue, and gambling, are also from time to time treated to a little decorous and respectful raillery. Who does not remember the famous laws of polite breeding written out by Mr. Nash—Goldsmith hints that neither Mr. Nash nor his fair correspondent at Blenheim, the Duchess of Marlborough, excelled in English composition—for the guidance of the ladies and gentlemen who were under the sway of the King of Bath? "But were we to give

laws to a nursery, we should make them childish laws," Goldsmith writes gravely. "His statutes, though stupid, were addressed to fine gentlemen and ladies, and were probably received with sympathetic approbation. It is certain they were in general religiously observed by his subjects, and executed by him with impartiality; neither rank nor fortune shielded the refractory from his resentment." Nash, however, was not content with prose in enforcing good manners. Having waged deadly war against the custom of wearing boots, and having found his ordinary armoury of no avail against the obduracy of the country squires, he assailed them in the impassioned language of poetry, and produced the following "Invitation to the Assembly," which, as Goldsmith remarks, was highly relished by the nobility at Bath on account of its keenness, severity, and particularly its good rhymes.

"Come, one and all, to Hoyden Hall,
For there's the assembly this night;
None but prude fools
Mind manners and rules;
We Hoydens do decency slight.
Come, trollops and slatterns,
Cocked hats and white aprons,
This best our modesty suits;
For why should not we
In dress be as free
As Hogs-Norton squires in boots?"

The sarcasm was too much for the squires, who yielded in a body; and when any stranger through inadvertence presented himself in the assembly-rooms in boots, Nash was so completely master of the situation that he would

politely step up to the intruder and suggest that he had forgotten his horse.

Goldsmith does not magnify the intellectual capacity of his hero; but he gives him credit for a sort of rude wit that was sometimes effective enough. His physician, for example, having called on him to see whether he had followed a prescription that had been sent him the previous day, was greeted in this fashion: "Followed your prescription? No. Egad, if I had, I should have broken my neck, for I flung it out of the two pair of stairs window." For the rest, this diverting biography contains some excellent warnings against the vice of gambling; with a particular account of the manner in which the Government of the day tried by statute after statute to suppress the tables at Tunbridge and Bath, thereby only driving the sharpers to new subterfuges. That the Beau was in alliance with sharpers, or, at least, that he was a sleeping partner in the firm, his biographer admits; but it is urged on his behalf that he was the most generous of winners, and again and again interfered to prevent the ruin of some gambler by whose folly he would himself have profited. His constant charity was well known; the money so lightly come by was at the disposal of any one who could prefer a piteous tale. Moreover he made no scruple about exacting from others that charity which they could well afford. One may easily guess who was the duchess mentioned in the following story of Goldsmith's narration:—

"The sums he gave and collected for the Hospital were great, and his manner of doing it was no less admirable. I am told that he was once collecting money in Wilt-

shire's room for that purpose, when a lady entered, who is more remarkable for her wit than her charity, and not being able to pass by him unobserved, she gave him a pat with her fan, and said, 'You must put down a trifle for me, Nash, for I have no money in my pocket.' 'Yes, madam,' says he, 'that I will with pleasure, if your grace will tell me when to stop;' then taking an handful of guineas out of his pocket, he began to tell them into his white hat — 'One, two, three, four, five——' 'Hold, hold!' says the duchess, 'consider what you are about.' 'Consider your rank and fortune, madam,' says Nash, and continues telling—'six, seven, eight, nine, ten.' Here the duchess called again, and seemed angry. 'Pray compose yourself, madam,' cried Nash, 'and don't interrupt the work of charity,—eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen.' Here the duchess stormed, and caught hold of his hand. 'Peace, madam,' says Nash, 'you shall have your name written in letters of gold, madam, and upon the front of the building, madam,—sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.' 'I won't pay a farthing more,' says the duchess. 'Charity hides a multitude of sins,' replies Nash,—'twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five.' 'Nash,' says she, 'I protest you frighten me out of my wits. L—d, I shall die!' 'Madam, you will never die with doing good; and if you do, it will be the better for you,' answered Nash, and was about to proceed; but perceiving her grace had lost all patience, a parley ensued, when he, after much altercation, agreed to stop his hand and compound with her grace for thirty guineas. The duchess, however, seemed displeased the whole evening, and when he came to the

table where she was playing, bid him, 'Stand farther, an ugly devil, for she hated the sight of him.' But her grace afterwards having a run of good luck, called Nash to her. 'Come,' says she, 'I will be friends with you, though you are a fool; and to let you see I am not angry, there is ten guineas more for your charity. But this I insist on, that neither my name nor the sum shall be mentioned.'"

At the ripe age of eighty-seven the "beau of three generations" breathed his last (1761); and, though he had fallen into poor ways, there were those alive who remembered his former greatness, and who chronicled it in a series of epitaphs and poetical lamentations. "One thing is common almost with all of them," says Goldsmith, "and that is that Venus, Cupid, and the Graces are commanded to weep, and that Bath shall never find such another." These effusions are forgotten now; and so would Beau Nash be also, but for this biography, which, no doubt meant merely for the book-market of the day, lives and is of permanent value by reason of the charm of its style, its pervading humour, and the vivacity of its descriptions of the fashionable follies of the eighteenth century. *Nullum fere genus scribendi non tetigit. Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.* Who but Goldsmith could have written so delightful a book about such a poor creature as Beau Nash?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARREST.

It was no doubt owing to Newbery that Goldsmith, after his return to London, was induced to abandon, temporarily or altogether, his apartments in Wine Office Court, and take lodgings in the house of a Mrs. Fleming, who lived somewhere or other in Islington. Newbery had rooms in Canonbury House, a curious old building that still exists; and it may have occurred to the publisher that Goldsmith, in this suburban district, would not only be nearer him for consultation and so forth, but also might pay more attention to his duties than when he was among the temptations of Fleet Street. Goldsmith was working industriously in the service of Newbery at this time (1763-4); in fact, so completely was the bookseller in possession of the hack, that Goldsmith's board and lodging in Mrs. Fleming's house, arranged for at £50 a year, was paid by Newbery himself. Writing prefaces, revising new editions, contributing reviews—this was the sort of work he undertook, with more or less content, as the equivalent of the modest sums Mr. Newbery disbursed for him or handed over as pocket-money. In the midst of all this drudgery he was now secretly engaged on work that aimed at something

higher than mere payment of bed and board. The smooth lines of the *Traveller* were receiving further polish; the gentle-natured *Vicar* was writing his simple, quaint, tender story. And no doubt Goldsmith was spurred to try something better than hack-work by the associations that he was now forming, chiefly under the wise and benevolent friendship of Johnson.

Anxious always to be thought well of, he was now beginning to meet people whose approval was worthy of being sought. He had been introduced to Reynolds. He had become the friend of Hogarth. He had even made the acquaintance of Mr. Boswell, from Scotland. Moreover, he had been invited to become one of the original members of the famous Club of which so much has been written; his fellow-members being Reynolds, Johnson, Burke, Hawkins, Beauclerk, Bennet Langton, and Dr. Nugent. It is almost certain that it was at Johnson's instigation that he had been admitted into this choice fellowship. Long before either the *Traveller* or the *Vicar* had been heard of, Johnson had perceived the literary genius that obscurely burned in the uncouth figure of this Irishman; and was anxious to impress on others Goldsmith's claims to respect and consideration. In the minute record kept by Boswell of his first evening with Johnson at the Mitre Tavern, we find Johnson saying, "Dr. Goldsmith is one of the first men we now have as an author, and he is a very worthy man too. He has been loose in his principles, but he is coming right." Johnson took walks with Goldsmith; did him the honour of disputing with him on all occasions; bought a copy of the *Life of Nash* when it appeared—an unusual compliment for one author to pay another, in their day or in

ours; allowed him to call on Miss Williams, the blind old lady in Bolt Court; and generally was his friend, counsellor, and champion.' Accordingly, when Mr. Boswell entertained the great Cham to supper at the Mitre—a sudden quarrel with his landlord having made it impossible for him to order the banquet at his own house—he was careful to have Dr. Goldsmith of the company. His guests that evening were Johnson, Goldsmith, Davies (the actor and bookseller who had conferred on Boswell the invaluable favour of an introduction to Johnson), Mr. Eccles, and the Rev. Mr. Ogilvie, a Scotch poet who deserves our gratitude because it was his inopportune patriotism that provoked, on this very evening, the memorable epigram about the high-road leading to England. "Goldsmith," says Boswell, who had not got over his envy at Goldsmith's being allowed to visit the blind old pensioner in Bolt-court, "as usual, endeavoured with too much eagerness to *shine*, and disputed very warmly with Johnson against the well-known maxim of the British constitution, 'The king can do no wrong.'" It was a dispute not so much about facts as about phraseology; and, indeed, there seems to be no great warmth in the expressions used on either side. Goldsmith affirmed that "what was morally false could not be politically true;" and that, in short, the king could by the misuse of his regal power do wrong. Johnson replied, that, in such a case, the immediate agents of the king were the persons to be tried and punished for the offence. "The king, though he should command, cannot force a judge to condemn a man unjustly; therefore it is the judge whom we prosecute and punish." But when he stated that the king "is

above everything, and there is no power by which he can be tried," he was surely forgetting an important chapter in English history. "What did Cromwell do for his country?" he himself asked, during his subsequent visit to Scotland, of old Auchinleck, Boswell's father. "God, Doctor," replied the vile Whig, "*hè garred kings ken they had a lith in their necks.*"

For some time after this evening Goldsmith drops out of Boswell's famous memoir; perhaps the compiler was not anxious to give him too much prominence. They had not liked each other from the outset. Boswell, vexed by the greater intimacy of Goldsmith with Johnson, called him a blunderer, a feather-brained person; and described his appearance in no flattering terms. Goldsmith, on the other hand, on being asked who was this Scotch cur that followed Johnson's heels, answered, "He is not a cur: you are too severe—he is only a bur. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport, and he has the faculty of sticking." Boswell would probably have been more tolerant of Goldsmith as a rival, if he could have known that on a future day he was to have Johnson all to himself—to carry him to remote wilds and exhibit him as a portentous literary phenomenon to Highland lairds. It is true that Johnson, at an early period of his acquaintance with Boswell, did talk vaguely about a trip to the Hebrides; but the young Scotch idolater thought it was all too good to be true. The mention of Sir James Macdonald, says Boswell, "led us to talk of the Western Islands of Scotland, to visit which he expressed a wish that then appeared to me a very romantic fancy, which I little thought would be afterwards realised. He told

me that his father had put Martin's account of those islands into his hands when he was very young, and that he was highly pleased with it; that he was particularly struck with the St. Kilda man's notion that the high church of Glasgow had been hollowed out of a rock; a circumstance to which old Mr. Johnson had directed his attention." Unfortunately Goldsmith not only disappears from the pages of Boswell's biography at this time, but also in great measure from the ken of his companions. He was deeply in debt; no doubt the fine clothes he had been ordering from Mr. Filby in order that he might "shine" among those notable persons, had something to do with it; he had tried the patience of the booksellers; and he had been devoting a good deal of time to work not intended to elicit immediate payment. The most patient endeavours to trace out his changes of lodgings, and the fugitive writings that kept him in daily bread, have not been very successful. It is to be presumed that Goldsmith had occasionally to go into hiding to escape from his creditors; and so was missed from his familiar haunts. We only reach daylight again, to find Goldsmith being under threat of arrest from his landlady; and for the particulars of this famous affair it is necessary to return to Boswell.

Boswell was not in London at that time; but his account was taken down subsequently from Johnson's narration; and his accuracy in other matters, his extraordinary memory, and scrupulous care, leave no doubt in the mind that his version of the story is to be preferred to those of Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins. We may take it that these are Johnson's own words:—

"I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for £60. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

We do not know who this landlady was—it cannot now be made out whether the incident occurred at Islington, or in the rooms that Goldsmith partially occupied in the Temple; but even if Mrs. Fleming be the landlady in question, she was deserving neither of Goldsmith's rating nor of the reprimands that have been bestowed upon her by later writers. Mrs. Fleming had been exceedingly kind to Goldsmith. Again and again in her bills we find items significantly marked £0 0*s.* 0*d.* And if her accounts with her lodger did get hopelessly into arrear; and if she was annoyed by seeing him go out in fine clothes to sup at the Mitre; and if, at length, her patience gave way, and she determined to have her rights in one way or another, she was no worse

than landladies—who are only human beings, and not divinely appointed protectresses of genius—ordinarily are. Mrs. Piozzi says that when Johnson came back with the money, Goldsmith "called the woman of the house directly to partake of punch, and pass their time in merriment." This would be a dramatic touch; but, after Johnson's quietly corking the bottle of Madeira, it is more likely that no such thing occurred; especially as Boswell quotes the statement as an "extreme inaccuracy."

The novel which Johnson had taken away and sold to Francis Newbery, a nephew of the elder bookseller, was, as every one knows, the *Vicar of Wakefield*. That Goldsmith, amidst all his pecuniary distresses, should have retained this piece in his desk, instead of pawning or promising it to one of his bookselling patrons, points to but one conclusion—that he was building high hopes on it, and was determined to make it as good as lay within his power. Goldsmith put an anxious finish into all his better work; perhaps that is the secret of the graceful ease that is now apparent in every line. Any young writer who may imagine that the power of clear and concise literary expression comes by nature, cannot do better than study, in Mr. Cunningham's big collection of Goldsmith's writings, the continual and minute alterations which the author considered necessary even after the first edition—sometimes when the second and third editions—had been published. Many of these, especially in the poetical works, were merely improvements in sound as suggested by a singularly sensitive ear, as when he altered the line

"Amidst the ruin, heedless of the dead,"

which had appeared in the first three editions of the *Traveller*, into

"There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,"

which appeared in the fourth. But the majority of the omissions and corrections were prompted by a careful taste, that abhorred everything redundant or slovenly. It has been suggested that when Johnson carried off the *Vicar of Wakefield* to Francis Newbery, the manuscript was not quite finished, but had to be completed afterwards. There was at least plenty of time for that. Newbery does not appear to have imagined that he had obtained a prize in the lottery of literature. He paid the £60 for it—clearly on the assurance of the great father of learning of the day, that there was merit in the little story—somewhere about the end of 1764; but the tale was not issued to the public until March, 1766. "And, sir," remarked Johnson to Boswell, with regard to the sixty pounds, "a sufficient price too, when it was sold; for then the fame of Goldsmith had not been elevated, as it afterwards was, by his *Traveller;* and the bookseller had such faint hopes of profit by his bargain, that he kept the manuscript by him a long time, and did not publish it till after the *Traveller* had appeared. Then, to be sure, it was accidentally worth more money."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRAVELLER.

This poem of the *Traveller*, the fruit of much secret labour and the consummation of the hopes of many years, was lying completed in Goldsmith's desk when the incident of the arrest occurred; and the elder Newbery had undertaken to publish it. Then, as at other times, Johnson lent this wayward child of genius a friendly hand. He read over the proof-sheets for Goldsmith; was so kind as to put in a line here or there where he thought fit; and prepared a notice of the poem for the *Critical Review*. The time for the appearance of this new claimant for poetical honours was propitious. "There was perhaps no point in the century," says Professor Masson, "when the British Muse, such as she had come to be, was doing less, or had so nearly ceased to do anything, or to have any good opinion of herself, as precisely about the year 1764. Young was dying; Gray was recluse and indolent; Johnson had long given over his metrical experimentations on any except the most inconsiderable scale; Akenside, Armstrong, Smollett, and others less known, had pretty well revealed the amount of their

worth in poetry; and Churchill, after his ferocious blaze of what was really rage and declamation in metre, though conventionally it was called poetry, was prematurely defunct. Into this lull came Goldsmith's short but carefully finished poem." "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time," remarked Johnson to Boswell, on the very first evening after the return of young Auchinleck to London. It would have been no matter for surprise had Goldsmith dedicated this first work that he published under his own name to Johnson, who had for so long been his constant friend and adviser; and such a dedication would have carried weight in certain quarters. But there was a finer touch in Goldsmith's thought of inscribing the book to his brother Henry; and no doubt the public were surprised and pleased to find a poor devil of an author dedicating a work to an Irish parson with £40 a year, from whom he could not well expect any return. It will be remembered that it was to this brother Henry that Goldsmith, ten years before, had sent the first sketch of the poem; and now the wanderer,

> "Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow."

declares how his heart untravelled

> "Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,
> And drags at each remove a lengthening chain."

The very first line of the poem strikes a key-note—there is in it a pathetic thrill of distance, and regret, and longing; and it has the soft musical sound that pervades the whole composition. It is exceedingly interesting to

note, as has already been mentioned, how Goldsmith altered and altered these lines until he had got them full of gentle vowel sounds. Where, indeed, in the English language could one find more graceful melody than this?—

> "The naked negro, panting at the line,
> Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
> Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
> And thanks his gods for all the good they gave."

It has been observed also that Goldsmith was the first to introduce into English poetry sonorous American —or rather Indian—names, as when he writes in this poem,

> "Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,
> And Niagara stuns with thundering sound,"

—and if it be charged against him that he ought to have known the proper accentuation of Niagara, it may be mentioned as a set-off that Sir Walter Scott, in dealing with his own country, mis-accentuated "Glenaládale," to say nothing of his having made of Roseneath an island. (Another characteristic of the *Traveller* is the extraordinary choiceness and conciseness of the diction, which, instead of suggesting pedantry or affectation, betrays on the contrary nothing but a delightful ease and grace.

The English people are very fond of good English; and thus it is that couplets from the *Traveller* and the *Deserted Village* have come into the common stock of our language, and that sometimes not so much on account of the ideas they convey, as through their

singular precision of epithet and musical sound. It is enough to make the angels weep, to find such a couplet as this—

> "Cheerful at morn, he wakes from short repose,
> Breasts the keen air, and carols as he goes,"

murdered in several editions of Goldsmith's works by the substitution of the commonplace "breathes" for "breasts"—and that, after Johnson had drawn particular attention to the line by quoting it in his Dictionary. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted that the literary charm of the *Traveller* is more apparent than the value of any doctrine, however profound or ingenious, which the poem was supposed to inculcate. We forget all about the "particular principle of happiness" possessed by each European state, in listening to the melody of the singer, and in watching the successive and delightful pictures that he calls up before the imagination.

> "As in those domes where Cæsars once bore sway,
> Defaced by time, and tottering in decay,
> There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
> The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed;
> And, wondering man could want the larger pile,
> Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile."

Then notice the blaze of patriotic idealism that bursts forth when he comes to talk of England. What sort of England had he been familiar with when he was consorting with the meanest wretches—the poverty-stricken, the sick, and squalid—in those Fleet-Street dens? But it is an England of bright streams and spacious lawns

of which he writes; and as for the people who inhabit the favoured land—

> "Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state,
> With daring aims irregularly great;
> Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
> I see the lords of human kind pass by."

"Whenever I write anything," Goldsmith had said, with a humorous exaggeration which Boswell, as usual, takes *au sérieux*, "the public *make a point* to know nothing about it." But we have Johnson's testimony to the fact that the *Traveller* "brought him into high reputation." No wonder. When the great Cham declares it to be the finest poem published since the time of Pope, we are irresistibly forced to think of the *Essay on Man*. What a contrast there is between that tedious and stilted effort, and this clear burst of bird-song! The *Traveller*, however, did not immediately become popular. It was largely talked about, naturally, among Goldsmith's friends; and Johnson would scarcely suffer any criticism of it. At a dinner given long afterwards at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, and fully reported by the invaluable Boswell, Reynolds remarked, "I was glad to hear Charles Fox say it was one of the finest poems in the English language." "Why were you glad?" said Langton. "You surely had no doubt of this before?" Hereupon Johnson struck in: "No; the merit of the *Traveller* is so well established, that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it." And he went on to say—Goldsmith having died and got beyond the reach of all critics and creditors some three or four years before this time—

"Goldsmith was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster Abbey; and every year he lived would have deserved it better."

Presently people began to talk about the new poem. A second edition was issued; a third; a fourth. It is not probable that Goldsmith gained any pecuniary benefit from the growing popularity of the little book; but he had "struck for honest fame," and that was now coming to him. He even made some slight acquaintance with "the great;" and here occurs an incident which is one of many that account for the love that the English people have for Goldsmith. It appears that Hawkins, calling one day on the Earl of Northumberland, found the author of the *Traveller* waiting in the outer room, in response to an invitation. Hawkins, having finished his own business, retired, but lingered about until the interview between Goldsmith and his lordship was over, having some curiosity about the result. Here follows Goldsmith's report to Hawkins. "His lordship told me he had read my poem, and was much delighted with it; that he was going to be Lord-lieutenant of Ireland; and that, hearing that I was a native of that country, he should be glad to do me any kindness." "What did you answer?" says Hawkins, no doubt expecting to hear of some application for pension or post. "Why," said Goldsmith, "I could say nothing but that I had a brother there, a clergyman, that stood in need of help," —and then he explained to Hawkins that he looked to the booksellers for support, and was not inclined to place dependence on the promises of great men. "Thus did this idiot in the affairs of the world," adds Hawkins,

with a fatuity that is quite remarkable in its way, "trifle with his fortunes, and put back the hand that was held out to assist him! Other offers of a like kind he either rejected or failed to improve, contenting himself with the patronage of one nobleman, whose mansion afforded him the delights of a splendid table and a retreat for a few days from the metropolis." It is a great pity we have not a description from the same pen of Johnson's insolent ingratitude in flinging the pair of boots down stairs.

CHAPTER X.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITING.

But one pecuniary result of this growing fame was a joint offer on the part of Griffin and Newbery of £20 for a selection from his printed essays; and this selection was forthwith made and published, with a preface written for the occasion. Here at once we can see that Goldsmith takes firmer ground. There is an air of confidence—of gaiety, even—in his address to the public; although, as usual, accompanied by a whimsical mock-modesty that is extremely odd and effective. "Whatever right I have to complain of the public," he says, "they can, as yet, have no just reason to complain of me. If I have written dull Essays, they have hitherto treated them as dull Essays. Thus far we are at least upon par, and until they think fit to make me their humble debtor by praise, I am resolved not to lose a single inch of my self-importance. Instead, therefore, of attempting to establish a credit amongst them, it will perhaps be wiser to apply to some more distant correspondent; and as my drafts are in some danger of being protested at home, it may not be imprudent, upon this occasion, to draw my bills upon Posterity.

"MR. POSTERITY,

"SIR,—Nine hundred and ninety-nine years after sight hereof pay the bearer, or order, a thousand pounds worth of praise, free from all deductions whatsoever, it being a commodity that will then be very serviceable to him, and place it to the account of, &c."

The bill is not yet due; but there can in the meantime be no harm in discounting it so far as to say that these Essays deserve very decided praise. They deal with all manner of topics, matters of fact, matters of imagination, humorous descriptions, learned criticisms; and then, whenever the entertainer thinks he is becoming dull, he suddenly tells a quaint little story and walks off amidst the laughter he knows he has produced. It is not a very ambitious or sonorous sort of literature; but it was admirably fitted for its aim—the passing of the immediate hour in an agreeable and fairly intellectual way. One can often see, no doubt, that these Essays are occasionally written in a more or less perfunctory fashion, the writer not being moved by much enthusiasm in his subject; but even then a quaint literary grace seldom fails to atone, as when, writing about the English clergy, and complaining that they do not sufficiently in their addresses stoop to mean capacities, he says—"Whatever may become of the higher orders of mankind, who are generally possessed of collateral motives to virtue, the vulgar should be particularly regarded, whose behaviour in civil life is totally hinged upon their hopes and fears. Those who constitute the basis of the great fabric of society should be particularly regarded; for in policy, as in architecture, ruin is most fatal when it begins from the bottom." There was,

indeed, throughout Goldsmith's miscellaneous writing much more common sense than might have been expected from a writer who was supposed to have none.

As regards his chance criticisms on dramatic and poetical literature, these are generally found to be incisive and just; while sometimes they exhibit a wholesome disregard of mere tradition and authority. "Milton's translation of Horace's Ode to Pyrrha," he says, for example, "is universally known and generally admired, in our opinion much above its merit." If the present writer might for a moment venture into such an arena, he would express the honest belief that that translation is the very worst translation that was ever made of anything. But there is the happy rendering of *simplex munditiis*, which counts for much.

By this time Goldsmith had also written his charming ballad of *Edwin and Angelina*, which was privately "printed for the amusement of the Countess of Northumberland," and which afterwards appeared in the *Vicar of Wakefield*. It seems clear enough that this quaint and pathetic piece was suggested by an old ballad beginning,

> "Gentle heardsman, tell to me,
> Of curtesy I thee pray,
> Unto the towne of Walsingham
> Which is the right and ready way,"

which Percy had shown to Goldsmith, and which, patched up, subsequently appeared in the *Reliques*. But Goldsmith's ballad is original enough to put aside all the discussion about plagiarism which was afterwards started.

In the old fragment the weeping pilgrim receives directions from the herdsman, and goes on her way, and we hear of her no more; in *Edwin and Angelina* the forlorn and despairing maiden suddenly finds herself confronted by the long-lost lover whom she had so cruelly used. This is the dramatic touch that reveals the hand of the artist. And here again it is curious to note the care with which Goldsmith repeatedly revised his writings. The ballad originally ended with these two stanzas:—

"Here amidst sylvan bowers we'll rove,
From lawn to woodland stray;
Blest as the songsters of the grove,
And innocent as they.

"To all that want, and all that wail,
Our pity shall be given,
And when this life of love shall fail,
We'll love again in heaven."

But subsequently it must have occurred to the author that, the dramatic disclosure once made, and the lovers restored to each other, any lingering over the scene only weakened the force of the climax; hence these stanzas were judiciously excised. It may be doubted, however, whether the original version of the last couplet:

"And the last sigh that rends the heart
Shall break thy Edwin's too,"

was improved by being altered into

"The sigh that rends thy constant heart
Shall break thy Edwin's too."

Meanwhile Goldsmith had resorted to hack-work again; nothing being expected from the *Vicar of Wakefield*, now lying in Newbery's shop, for that had been paid for, and his expenses were increasing, as became his greater station. In the interval between the publication of the *Traveller* and of the *Vicar*, he moved into better chambers in Garden Court; he hired a man-servant, he blossomed out into very fine clothes. Indeed, so effective did his first suit seem to be—the purple silk small-clothes, the scarlet roquelaure, the wig, sword, and gold-headed cane—that, as Mr. Forster says, he "amazed his friends with no less than three similar suits, not less expensive, in the next six months." Part of this display was no doubt owing to a suggestion from Reynolds that Goldsmith, having a medical degree, might just as well add the practice of a physician to his literary work, to magnify his social position. Goldsmith, always willing to please his friends, acceded; but his practice does not appear to have been either extensive or long-continued. It is said that he drew out a prescription for a certain Mrs. Sidebotham which so appalled the apothecary that he refused to make it up; and that, as the lady sided with the apothecary, he threw up the case and his profession at the same time. If it was money Goldsmith wanted, he was not likely to get it in that way; he had neither the appearance nor the manner fitted to humour the sick and transform healthy people into valetudinarians. If it was the esteem of his friends and popularity outside that circle, he was soon to acquire enough of both. On the 27th March, 1766, fifteen months after the appearance of the *Traveller*, the *Vicar of Wakefield* was published.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

THE *Vicar of Wakefield*, considered structurally, follows the lines of the Book of Job. You take a good man, overwhelm him with successive misfortunes, show the pure flame of his soul burning in the midst of the darkness, and then, as the reward of his patience and fortitude and submission, restore him gradually to happiness, with even larger flocks and herds than before. The machinery by which all this is brought about is, in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the weak part of the story. The plot is full of wild improbabilities; in fact, the expedients by which all the members of the family are brought together and made happy at the same time, are nothing short of desperate. It is quite clear, too, that the author does not know what to make of the episode of Olivia and her husband; they are allowed to drop through; we leave him playing the French horn at a relation's house; while she, in her father's home, is supposed to be unnoticed, so much are they all taken up with the rejoicings over the double wedding. It is very probable that when Goldsmith began the story he had no very definite plot concocted; and that it was only

when the much-persecuted Vicar had to be restored to happiness, that he found the entanglements surrounding him, and had to make frantic efforts to break through them. But, be that as it may, it is not for the plot that people now read the *Vicar of Wakefield;* it is not the intricacies of the story that have made it the delight of the world. Surely human nature must be very much the same when this simple description of a quiet English home went straight to the heart of nations in both hemispheres.

And the wonder is that Goldsmith of all men should have produced such a perfect picture of domestic life. What had his own life been but a moving about between garret and tavern, between bachelor's lodgings and clubs? Where had he seen—unless, indeed, he looked back through the mist of years to the scenes of his childhood—all this gentle government, and wise blindness; all this affection, and consideration, and respect? There is as much human nature in the character of the Vicar alone as would have furnished any fifty of the novels of that day, or of this. Who has not been charmed by his sly and quaint humour, by his moral dignity and simple vanities, even by the little secrets he reveals to us of his paternal rule. "'Ay,' returned I, not knowing well what to think of the matter, 'heaven grant they may be both the better for it this day three months!' This was one of those observations I usually made to impress my wife with an opinion of my sagacity; for if the girls succeeded, then it was a pious wish fulfilled; but if anything unfortunate ensued, then it might be looked on as a prophecy." We know how Miss Olivia was

answered, when, at her mother's prompting, she set up for being well skilled in controversy :—

"'Why, my dear, what controversy can she have read?' cried I. 'It does not occur to me that I ever put such books into her hands: you certainly overrate her merit.'—'Indeed, papa,' replied Olivia, 'she does not; I have read a great deal of controversy. I have read the disputes between Thwackum and Square; the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, the savage; and I am now employed in reading the controversy in Religious Courtship.'—'Very well,' cried I, 'that's a good girl; I find you are perfectly qualified for making converts, and so go help your mother to make the gooseberry pie.'"

It is with a great gentleness that the good man reminds his wife and daughters that, after their sudden loss of fortune, it does not become them to wear much finery. "The first Sunday, in particular, their behaviour served to mortify me. I had desired my girls the preceding night to be dressed early the next day; for I always loved to be at church a good while before the rest of the congregation. They punctually obeyed my directions; but when we were to assemble in the morning at breakfast, down came my wife and daughters, dressed out in all their former splendour; their hair plastered up with pomatum, their faces patched to taste, their trains bundled up in a heap behind, and rustling at every motion. I could not help smiling at their vanity, particularly that of my wife, from whom I expected more discretion. In this exigence, therefore, my only resource was to order my son, with an important air, to call our coach. The girls were amazed

at the command; but I repeated it with more solemnity than before. 'Surely, my dear, you jest,' cried my wife; 'we can walk it perfectly well: we want no coach to carry us now.'—'You mistake, child,' returned I, 'we do want a coach; for if we walk to church in this trim, the very children in the parish will hoot after us.'—'Indeed,' replied my wife, 'I always imagined that my Charles was fond of seeing his children neat and handsome about him.'—'You may be as neat as you please,' interrupted I, 'and I shall love you the better for it; but all this is not neatness, but frippery. These rufflings, and pinkings, and patchings will only make us hated by all the wives of our neighbours. No, my children,' continued I, more gravely, 'those gowns may be altered into something of a plainer cut; for finery is very unbecoming in us, who want the means of decency. I do not know whether such flouncing and shredding is becoming even in the rich, if we consider, upon a moderate calculation, that the nakedness of the indigent world might be clothed from the trimmings of the vain.'

"This remonstrance had the proper effect: they went with great composure, that very instant, to change their dress; and the next day I had the satisfaction of finding my daughters, at their own request, employed in cutting up their trains into Sunday waistcoats for Dick and Bill, the two little ones; and, what was still more satisfactory, the gowns seemed improved by this curtailing." And again when he discovered the two girls making a wash for their faces:—"My daughters seemed equally busy with the rest; and I observed them for a good while cooking something over the fire. I at first

supposed they were assisting their mother, but little Dick informed me, in a whisper, that they were making a wash for the face. Washes of all kinds I had a natural antipathy to; for I knew that, instead of mending the complexion, they spoil it. I therefore approached my chair by sly degrees to the fire, and grasping the poker, as if it wanted mending, seemingly by accident overturned the whole composition, and it was too late to begin another."

All this is done with such a light, homely touch, that one gets familiarly to know these people without being aware of it. There is no insistance. There is no dragging you along by the collar; confronting you with certain figures; and compelling you to look at this and study that. The artist stands by you, and laughs in his quiet way; and you are laughing too, when suddenly you find that human beings have silently come into the void before you; and you know them for friends; and even after the vision has faded away, and the beautiful light and colour and glory of romance-land have vanished, you cannot forget them. They have become part of your life; you will take them to the grave with you.

The story, as every one perceives, has its obvious blemishes. "There are an hundred faults in this Thing," says Goldsmith himself, in the prefixed Advertisement. But more particularly, in the midst of all the impossibilities taking place in and around the jail, when that chameleon-like *deus ex machinâ*, Mr. Jenkinson, winds up the tale in hot haste, Goldsmith pauses to put in a sort of apology. "Nor can I go on without a reflection," he says gravely, "on those accidental meetings, which,

though they happen every day, seldom excite our surprise but upon some extraordinary occasion. To what a fortuitous concurrence do we not owe every pleasure and convenience of our lives! How many seeming accidents must unite before we can be clothed or fed! The peasant must be disposed to labour, the shower must fall, the wind fill the merchant's sail, or numbers must want the usual supply." This is Mr. Thackeray's "simple rogue" appearing again in adult life. Certainly, if our supply of food and clothing depended on such accidents as happened to make the Vicar's family happy all at once, there would be a good deal of shivering and starvation in the world. Moreover it may be admitted that on occasion Goldsmith's fine instinct deserts him; and even in describing those domestic relations which are the charm of the novel, he blunders into the unnatural. When Mr. Burchell, for example, leaves the house in consequence of a quarrel with Mrs. Primrose, the Vicar questions his daughter as to whether she had received from that poor gentleman any testimony of his affection for her. She replies No; but remembers to have heard him remark that he never knew a woman who could find merit in a man that was poor. "Such, my dear," continued the Vicar, "is the common cant of all the unfortunate or idle. But I hope you have been taught to judge properly of such men, and that it would be even madness to expect happiness from one who has been so very bad an economist of his own. Your mother and I have now better prospects for you. The next winter, which you will probably spend in town, will give you opportunities of making a more prudent choice." Now it is not at

all likely that a father, however anxious to have his daughter well married and settled, would ask her so delicate a question in open domestic circle, and would then publicly inform her that she was expected to choose a husband on her forthcoming visit to town.

Whatever may be said about any particular incident like this, the atmosphere of the book is true. Goethe, to whom a German translation of the *Vicar* was read by Herder some four years after the publication in England, not only declared it at the time to be one of the best novels ever written, but again and again throughout his life reverted to the charm and delight with which he had made the acquaintance of the English "prose-idyll," and took it for granted that it was a real picture of English life. Despite all the machinery of Mr. Jenkinson's schemes, who could doubt it? Again and again there are recurrent strokes of such vividness and naturalness that we yield altogether to the necromancer. Look at this perfect picture—of human emotion and outside nature—put in in a few sentences. The old clergyman, after being in search of his daughter, has found her, and is now—having left her in an inn—returning to his family and his home. "And now my heart caught new sensations of pleasure, the nearer I approached that peaceful mansion. As a bird that had been frighted from its nest, my affections outwent my haste, and hovered round my little fireside with all the rapture of expectation. I called up the many fond things I had to say, and anticipated the welcome I was to receive. I already felt my wife's tender embrace, and smiled at the joy of my little ones. As I walked but slowly, the night waned apace. The labourers of the day were all

retired to rest; the lights were out in every cottage; no sounds were heard but of the shrilling cock, and the deep-mouthed watch-dog at hollow distance. I approached my little abode of pleasure, and, before I was within a furlong of the place, our honest mastiff came running to welcome me." "*The deep-mouthed watch-dog at hollow distance;*"—what more perfect description of the stillness of night was ever given?

And then there are other qualities in this delightful *Vicar of Wakefield* than merely idyllic tenderness, and pathos, and sly humour. There is a firm presentation of the crimes and brutalities of the world. The pure light that shines within that domestic circle is all the brighter because of the black outer ring that is here and there indicated rather than described. How could we appreciate all the simplicities of the good man's household, but for the rogueries with which they are brought in contact? And although we laugh at Moses and his gross of green spectacles, and the manner in which the Vicar's wife and daughter are imposed on by Miss Wilhelmina Skeggs and Lady Blarney, with their lords and ladies and their tributes to virtue, there is no laughter demanded of us when we find the simplicity and moral dignity of the Vicar meeting and beating the jeers and taunts of the abandoned wretches in the prison. This is really a remarkable episode. The author was under the obvious temptation to make much comic material out of the situation; while another temptation, towards the goody-goody side, was not far off. But the Vicar undertakes the duty of reclaiming these castaways with a modest patience and earnestness in every way in keeping with his character; while they, on the other

hand, are not too easily moved to tears of repentance. His first efforts, it will be remembered, were not too successful. "Their insensibility excited my highest compassion, and blotted my own uneasiness from my mind. It even appeared a duty incumbent upon me to attempt to reclaim them. I resolved, therefore, once more to return, and, in spite of their contempt, to give them my advice, and conquer them by my perseverance. Going, therefore, among them again, I informed Mr. Jenkinson of my design, at which he laughed heartily, but communicated it to the rest. The proposal was received with the greatest good humour, as it promised to afford a new fund of entertainment to persons who had now no other resource for mirth but what could be derived from ridicule or debauchery.

"I therefore read them a portion of the service with a loud, unaffected voice, and found my audience perfectly merry upon the occasion. Lewd whispers, groans of contrition burlesqued, winking and coughing, alternately excited laughter. However, I continued with my natural solemnity to read on, sensible that what I did might mend some, but could itself receive no contamination from any.

"After reading, I entered upon my exhortation, which was rather calculated at first to amuse them than to reprove. I previously observed, that no other motive but their welfare could induce me to this; that I was their fellow-prisoner, and now got nothing by preaching. I was sorry, I said, to hear them so very profane; because they got nothing by it, but might lose a great deal: 'For be assured, my friends,' cried I,—'for you are my friends, however the world may disclaim your friendship,

—though you swore twelve thousand oaths in a day, it would not put one penny in your purse. Then what signifies calling every moment upon the devil, and courting his friendship, since you find how scurvily he uses you? He has given you nothing here, you find, but a mouthful of oaths and an empty belly; and, by the best accounts I have of him, he will give you nothing that's good hereafter.

"'If used ill in our dealings with one man, we naturally go elsewhere. Were it not worth your while, then, just to try how you may like the usage of another master, who gives you fair promises at least to come to him? Surely, my friends, of all stupidity in the world, his must be the greatest, who, after robbing a house, runs to the thief-takers for protection. And yet, how are you more wise? You are all seeking comfort from one that has already betrayed you, applying to a more malicious being than any thief-taker of them all; for they only decoy and then hang you; but he decoys and hangs, and, what is worst of all, will not let you loose after the hangman has done.'

"When I had concluded, I received the compliments of my audience, some of whom came and shook me by the hand, swearing that I was a very honest fellow, and that they desired my further acquaintance. I therefore promised to repeat my lecture next day, and actually conceived some hopes of making a reformation here; for it had ever been my opinion, that no man was past the hour of amendment, every heart lying open to the shafts of reproof, if the archer could but take a proper aim."

His wife and children, naturally dissuading him from an effort which seemed to them only to bring ridicule

upon him, are met by a grave rebuke; and on the next morning he descends to the common prison, where, he says, he found the prisoners very merry, expecting his arrival, and each prepared to play some gaol-trick on the Doctor.

"There was one whose trick gave more universal pleasure than all the rest; for, observing the manner in which I had disposed my books on the table before me, he very dexterously displaced one of them, and put an obscene jest-book of his own in the place. However, I took no notice of all that this mischievous group of little beings could do, but went on, perfectly sensible that what was ridiculous in my attempt would excite mirth only the first or second time, while what was serious would be permanent. My design succeeded, and in less than six days some were penitent, and all attentive.

"It was now that I applauded my perseverance and address, at thus giving sensibility to wretches divested of every moral feeling, and now began to think of doing them temporal services also, by rendering their situation somewhat more comfortable. Their time had hitherto been divided between famine and excess, tumultuous riot and bitter repining. Their only employment was quarrelling among each other, playing at cribbage, and cutting tobacco-stoppers. From this last mode of idle industry I took the hint of setting such as choose to work at cutting pegs for tobacconists and shoemakers, the proper wood being bought by a general subscription, and, when manufactured, sold by my appointment; so that each earned something every day—a trifle indeed, but sufficient to maintain him.

"I did not stop here, but instituted fines for the punish-

ment of immorality, and rewards for peculiar industry. Thus, in less than a fortnight I had formed them into something social and humane, and had the pleasure of regarding myself as a legislator who had brought men from their native ferocity into friendship and obedience."

Of course, all this about gaols and thieves was calculated to shock the nerves of those who liked their literature perfumed with rose-water. Madame Riccoboni, to whom Burke had sent the book, wrote to Garrick, "Le plaidoyer en faveur des voleurs, des petits larrons, des gens de mauvaises mœurs, est fort éloigné de me plaire." Others, no doubt, considered the introduction of Miss Skeggs and Lady Blarney as "vastly low." But the curious thing is that the literary critics of the day seem to have been altogether silent about the book—perhaps they were "puzzled" by it, as Southey has suggested. Mr. Forster, who took the trouble to search the periodical literature of the time, says that, "apart from bald recitals of the plot, not a word was said in the way of criticism about the book, either in praise or blame." The *St. James's Chronicle* did not condescend to notice its appearance, and the *Monthly Review* confessed frankly that nothing was to be made of it. The better sort of newspapers, as well as the more dignified reviews, contemptuously left it to the patronage of *Lloyd's Evening Post*, the *London Chronicle*, and journals of that class; which simply informed their readers that a new novel, called the *Vicar of Wakefield*, had been published, that "the editor is Doctor Goldsmith, who has affixed his name to an introductory Advertisement, and that such and such were the incidents of the story." Even his friends, with the excep-

tion of Burke, did not seem to consider that any remarkable new birth in literature had occurred; and it is probable that this was a still greater disappointment to Goldsmith, who was so anxious to be thought well of at the Club. However, the public took to the story. A second edition was published in May; a third in August. Goldsmith, it is true, received no pecuniary gain from this success, for, as we have seen, Johnson had sold the novel outright to Francis Newbery; but his name was growing in importance with the booksellers.

There was need that it should, for his increasing expenses—his fine clothes, his suppers, his whist at the Devil Tavern—were involving him in deeper and deeper difficulties. How was he to extricate himself?—or rather the question that would naturally occur to Goldsmith was how was he to continue that hand-to-mouth existence that had its compensations along with its troubles? Novels like the *Vicar of Wakefield* are not written at a moment's notice, even though any Newbery, judging by results, is willing to double that £60 which Johnson considered to be a fair price for the story at the time. There was the usual resource of hack-writing; and, no doubt, Goldsmith was compelled to fall back on that, if only to keep the elder Newbery, in whose debt he was, in a good humour. But the author of the *Vicar of Wakefield* may be excused if he looked round to see if there was not some more profitable work for him to turn his hand to. It was at this time that he began to think of writing a comedy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOOD-NATURED MAN.

Amid much miscellaneous work, mostly of the compilation order, the play of the *Good-natured Man* began to assume concrete form; insomuch that Johnson, always the friend of this erratic Irishman, had promised to write a Prologue for it. It is with regard to this Prologue that Boswell tells a foolish and untrustworthy story about Goldsmith. Dr. Johnson had recently been honoured by an interview with his Sovereign; and the members of the Club were in the habit of flattering him by begging for a repetition of his account of that famous event. On one occasion, during this recital, Boswell relates, Goldsmith "remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a Prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Doctor Johnson had lately enjoyed. At length the frankness and simplicity

of his natural character prevailed. He sprang from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and, in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, 'Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it.'" It is obvious enough that the only part of this anecdote which is quite worthy of credence is the actual phrase used by Goldsmith, which is full of his customary generosity and self-depreciation. All those "suspicions" of his envy of his friend may safely be discarded, for they are mere guesswork; even though it might have been natural enough for a man like Goldsmith, conscious of his singular and original genius, to measure himself against Johnson, who was merely a man of keen perception and shrewd reasoning, and to compare the deference paid to Johnson with the scant courtesy shown to himself.

As a matter of fact, the Prologue was written by Dr. Johnson; and the now complete comedy was, after some little arrangement of personal differences between Goldsmith and Garrick, very kindly undertaken by Reynolds, submitted for Garrick's approval. But nothing came of Reynolds's intervention. Perhaps Goldsmith resented Garrick's airs of patronage towards a poor devil of an author; perhaps Garrick was surprised by the manner in which well-intentioned criticisms were taken; at all events, after a good deal of shilly-shallying, the play was taken out of Garrick's hands. Fortunately, a project was just at this moment on foot for starting the rival theatre in Covent Garden,

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under the management of George Colman; and to Colman Goldsmith's play was forthwith consigned. The play was accepted; but it was a long time before it was produced; and in that interval it may fairly be presumed the *res angusta domi* of Goldsmith did not become any more free and generous than before. It was in this interval that the elder Newbery died; Goldsmith had one patron the less. Another patron who offered himself was civilly bowed to the door. This is an incident in Goldsmith's career which, like his interview with the Earl of Northumberland, should ever be remembered in his honour. The Government of the day were desirous of enlisting on their behalf the services of writers of somewhat better position than the mere libellers whose pens were the slaves of anybody's purse; and a Mr. Scott, a chaplain of Lord Sandwich, appears to have imagined that it would be be worth while to buy Goldsmith. He applied to Goldsmith in due course; and this is an account of the interview. "I found him in a miserable set of chambers in the Temple. I told him my authority; I told him I was empowered to pay most liberally for his exertions; and, would you believe it! he was so absurd as to say, 'I can earn as much as will supply my wants without writing for any party; the assistance you offer is therefore unnecessary to me.' And I left him in his garret." Needy as he was, Goldsmith had too much self-respect to become a paid libeller and cutthroat of public reputations.

On the evening of Friday, the 29th of January, 1768, when Goldsmith had now reached the age of forty, the comedy of *The Good-natured Man* was produced at

in 1768

Covent Garden Theatre. The Prologue had, according to promise, been written by Johnson; and a very singular prologue it was. Even Boswell was struck by the odd contrast between this sonorous piece of melancholy and the fun that was to follow. "The first lines of this Prologue," he conscientiously remarks, "are strongly characteristical of the dismal gloom of his mind; which, in his case, as in the case of all who are distressed with the same malady of imagination, transfers to others its own feelings. Who could suppose it was to introduce a comedy, when Mr. Bensley solemnly began—

> "'Pressed with the load of life, the weary mind
> Surveys the general toil of humankind'?

But this dark ground might make Goldsmith's humour shine the more." When we come to the comedy itself, we find but little bright humour in the opening passages. The author is obviously timid, anxious, and constrained. There is nothing of the brisk, confident vivacity with which *She Stoops to Conquer* opens. The novice does not yet understand the art of making his characters explain themselves; and accordingly the benevolent uncle and honest Jarvis indulge in a conversation which, laboriously descriptive of the character of young Honeywood, is spoken "at" the audience. With the entrance of young Honeywood himself, Goldsmith endeavours to become a little more sprightly; but there is still anxiety hanging over him, and the epigrams are little more than merely formal antitheses.

"*Jarvis.* This bill from your tailor; this from your mercer; and this from the little broker in Crooked Lane. He says he

has been at a great deal of trouble to get back the money you borrowed.

Hon. That I don't know; but I'm sure we were at a great deal of trouble in getting him to lend it.

Jar. He has lost all patience.

Hon. Then he has lost a very good thing.

Jar. There's that ten guineas you were sending to the poor gentleman and his children in the Fleet. I believe that would stop his mouth for a while at least.

Hon. Ay, Jarvis, but what will fill their mouths in the mean time?"

This young Honeywood, the hero of the play, is, and remains throughout, a somewhat ghostly personage. He has attributes; but no flesh or blood. There is much more substance in the next character introduced—the inimitable Croaker, who revels in evil forebodings and drinks deep of the luxury of woe. These are the two chief characters; but then a play must have a plot. And perhaps it would not be fair, so far as the plot is concerned, to judge of *The Good-natured Man* merely as a literary production. Intricacies that seem tedious and puzzling on paper appear to be clear enough on the stage: it is much more easy to remember the history and circumstances of a person whom we see before us, than to attach these to a mere name—especially as the name is sure to be clipped down from *Honeywood* to *Hon.* and from *Leontine* to *Leon.* However, it is in the midst of all the cross-purposes of the lovers that we once more come upon our old friend Beau Tibbs—though Mr. Tibbs is now in much better circumstances, and has been re-named by his creator Jack Lofty. Garrick had objected to the introduction of Jack, on the ground that he was only a distraction. But Goldsmith, whether

in writing a novel or a play, was more anxious to represent human nature than to prune a plot, and paid but little respect to the unities, if only he could arouse our interest. And who is not delighted with this Jack Lofty and his "duchessy" talk—his airs of patronage, his mysterious hints, his gay familiarity with the great, his audacious lying?

"*Lofty.* Waller? Waller? Is he of the house?

Mrs. Croaker. The modern poet of that name, sir.

Lof. Oh, a modern! We men of business despise the moderns; and as for the ancients, we have no time to read them. Poetry is a pretty thing enough for our wives and daughters; but not for us. Why now, here I stand that know nothing of books. I say, madam, I know nothing of books; and yet, I believe, upon a land-carriage fishery, a stamp act, or a jag-hire, I can talk my two hours without feeling the want of them.

Mrs. Cro. The world is no stranger to Mr. Lofty's eminence in every capacity.

Lof. I vow to gad, madam, you make me blush. I'm nothing, nothing, nothing in the world; a mere obscure gentleman. To be sure, indeed, one or two of the present ministers are pleased to represent me as a formidable man. I know they are pleased to bespatter me at all their little dirty levees. Yet, upon my soul, I wonder what they see in me to treat me so! 'Measures, not men, have always been my mark; and I vow, by all that's honourable, my resentment has never done the men, as mere men, any manner of harm—that is, as mere men.

Mrs. Cro. What importance, and yet what modesty!

Lof. Oh, if you talk of modesty, madam, there, I own, I'm accessible to praise: modesty is my foible: it was so the Duke of Brentford used to say of me. 'I love Jack Lofty,' he used to say: 'no man has a finer knowledge of things; quite a man of information; and when he speaks upon his

legs, by the Lord he's prodigious, he scouts them; and yet all men have their faults; too much modesty is his,' says his grace.

Mrs. Cro. And yet, I dare say, you don't want assurance when you come to solicit for your friends.

Lof. Oh, there indeed I'm in bronze. Apropos! I have just been mentioning Miss Richland's case to a certain personage; we must name no names. When I ask, I am not to be put off, madam. No, no, I take my friend by the button. A fine girl, sir; great justice in her case. A friend of mine —borough interest—business must be done, Mr. Secretary.— I say, Mr. Secretary, her business must be done, sir. That's my way, madam.

Mrs. Cro. Bless me! you said all this to the Secretary of State, did you?

Lof. I did not say the Secretary, did I? Well, curse it, since you have found me out, I will not deny it. It was to the Secretary."

Strangely enough, what may now seem to some of us the very best scene in the *Good-natured Man*—the scene, that is, in which young Honeywood, suddenly finding Miss Richland without, is compelled to dress up the two bailiffs in possession of his house and introduce them to her as gentlemen friends—was very nearly damning the play on the first night of its production. The pit was of opinion that it was "low;" and subsequently the critics took up the cry, and professed themselves to be so deeply shocked by the vulgar humours of the bailiffs that Goldsmith had to cut them out. But on the opening night the anxious author, who had been rendered nearly distracted by the cries and hisses produced by this scene, was somewhat reassured when the audience began to laugh again over the tribulations of Mr. Croaker. To the actor who played the part he expressed

his warm gratitude when the piece was over; assuring him that he had exceeded his own conception of the character, and that "the fine comic richness of his colouring made it almost appear as new to him as to any other person in the house."

The new play had been on the whole favourably received; and, when Goldsmith went along afterwards to the Club, his companions were doubtless not at all surprised to find him in good spirits. He was even merrier than usual; and consented to sing his favourite ballad about the Old Woman tossed in a Blanket. But those hisses and cries were still rankling in his memory; and he himself subsequently confessed that he was "suffering horrid tortures." Nay, when the other members of the Club had gone, leaving him and Johnson together, he "burst out a-crying, and even swore by —— that he would never write again." When Goldsmith told this story in after-days, Johnson was naturally astonished; perhaps—himself not suffering much from an excessive sensitiveness—he may have attributed that little burst of hysterical emotion to the excitement of the evening increased by a glass or two of punch, and determined therefore never to mention it. "All which, Doctor," he said, "I thought had been a secret between you and me; and I am sure I would not have said anything about it for the world." Indeed there was little to cry over, either in the first reception of the piece or in its subsequent fate. With the offending bailiffs cut out, the comedy would seem to have been very fairly successful. The proceeds of three of the evenings were Goldsmith's payment; and in this manner he received £400. Then Griffin published the play; and from this

source Goldsmith received an additional £100; so that altogether he was very well paid for his work. Moreover he had appealed against the judgment of the pit and the dramatic critics, by printing in the published edition the bailiff scene which had been removed from the stage; and the *Monthly Review* was so extremely kind as to say that "the bailiff and his blackguard follower appeared intolerable on the stage, yet we are not disgusted with them in the perusal." Perhaps we have grown less scrupulous since then; but at all events it would be difficult for anybody nowadays to find anything but good-natured fun in that famous scene. There is an occasional "damn," it is true; but then English officers have always been permitted that little playfulness, and these two gentlemen were supposed to "serve in the Fleet;" while if they had been particularly refined in their speech and manner, how could the author have aroused Miss Richland's suspicions? It is possible that the two actors who played the bailiff and his follower may have introduced some vulgar "gag" into their parts; but there is no warranty for anything of the kind in the play as we now read it.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOLDSMITH IN SOCIETY.

THE appearance of the *Good-natured Man* ushered in a halcyon period in Goldsmith's life. The *Traveller* and the *Vicar* had gained for him only reputation: this new comedy put £500 in his pocket. Of course that was too big a sum for Goldsmith to have about him long. Four-fifths of it he immediately expended on the purchase and decoration of a set of chambers in Brick Court, Middle Temple; with the remainder he appears to have begun a series of entertainments in this new abode, which were perhaps more remarkable for their mirth than their decorum. There was no sort of frolic in which Goldsmith would not indulge for the amusement of his guests; he would sing them songs; he would throw his wig to the ceiling; he would dance a minuet. And then they had cards, forfeits, blind-man's-buff, until Mr. Blackstone, then engaged on his *Commentaries* in the rooms below, was driven nearly mad by the uproar. These parties would seem to have been of a most nondescript character—chance gatherings of any obscure authors or actors whom he happened to meet; but from time to time there were more formal enter-

tainments, at which Johnson, Percy, and similar distinguished persons were present. Moreover, Dr. Goldsmith himself was much asked out to dinner too; and so, not content with the "Tyrian bloom, satin grain and garter, blue-silk breeches," which Mr. Filby had provided for the evening of the production of the comedy, he now had another suit "lined with silk, and gold buttons," that he might appear in proper guise. Then he had his airs of consequence too. This was his answer to an invitation from Kelly, who was his rival of the hour: "I would with pleasure accept your kind invitation, but to tell you the truth, my dear boy, my *Traveller* has found me a home in so many places, that I am engaged, I believe, three days. Let me see. To-day I dine with Edmund Burke, to-morrow with Dr. Nugent, and the next day with Topham Beauclerc; but I'll tell you what I'll do for you, I'll dine with you on Saturday." Kelly told this story as against Goldsmith; but surely there is not so much ostentation in the reply. Directly after *Tristram Shandy* was published, Sterne found himself fourteen deep in dinner engagements: why should not the author of the *Traveller* and the *Vicar* and the *Good-natured Man* have his engagements also? And perhaps it was but right that Mr. Kelly, who was after all only a critic and scribbler, though he had written a play which was for the moment enjoying an undeserved popularity, should be given to understand that Dr. Goldsmith was not to be asked to a hole-and-corner chop at a moment's notice. To-day he dines with Mr. Burke; to-morrow with Dr. Nugent; the day after with Mr. Beauclerc. If you wish to have the honour of his company, you may choose a day after

that; and then, with his new wig, with his coat of Tyrian bloom and blue silk breeches, with a smart sword at his side, his gold-headed cane in his hand, and his hat under his elbow, he will present himself in due course. Dr. Goldsmith is announced, and makes his grave bow: this is the man of genius about whom all the town is talking; the friend of Burke, of Reynolds, of Johnson, of Hogarth; this is not the ragged Irishman who was some time ago earning a crust by running errands for an apothecary.

Goldsmith's grand airs, however, were assumed but seldom; and they never imposed on anybody. His acquaintances treated him with a familiarity which testified rather to his good-nature than to their good taste. Now and again, indeed, he was prompted to resent this familiarity; but the effort was not successful. In the "high jinks" to which he good-humouredly resorted for the entertainment of his guests he permitted a freedom which it was afterwards not very easy to discard; and as he was always ready to make a butt of himself for the amusement of his friends and acquaintances, it came to be recognised that anybody was allowed to play off a joke on "Goldy." The jokes, such of them as have been put on record, are of the poorest sort. The horse-collar is never far off. One gladly turns from these dismal humours of the tavern and the club to the picture of Goldsmith's enjoying what he called a "Shoemaker's Holiday" in the company of one or two chosen intimates. Goldsmith, baited and bothered by the wits of a public-house, became a different being when he had assumed the guidance of a small party of chosen friends bent on having a day's frugal pleasure. We are indebted

to one Cooke, a neighbour of Goldsmith's in the Temple, not only for a most interesting description of one of those shoemaker's holidays, but also for the knowledge that Goldsmith had even now begun writing the *Deserted Village*, which was not published till 1770, two years later. Goldsmith, though he could turn out plenty of manufactured stuff for the booksellers, worked slowly at the special story or poem with which he meant to "strike for honest fame." This Mr. Cooke, calling on him one morning, discovered that Goldsmith had that day written these ten lines of the *Deserted Village* :—

> "Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
> Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
> How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
> Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
> How often have I paused on every charm,
> The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
> The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
> The decent church, that topt the neighbouring hill,
> The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
> For talking age and whispering lovers made!"

"Come," said he, "let me tell you this is no bad morning's work; and now, my dear boy, if you are not better engaged, I should be glad to enjoy a shoemaker's holiday with you." "A shoemaker's holiday," continues the writer of these reminiscences, "was a day of great festivity to poor Goldsmith, and was spent in the following innocent manner. Three or four of his intimate friends rendezvoused at his chambers to breakfast about ten o'clock in the morning; at eleven they proceeded by the City Road and through the fields

to Highbury Barn to dinner; about six o'clock in the evening they adjourned to White Conduit House to drink tea; and concluded by supping at the Grecian or Temple Exchange coffee-house or at the Globe in Fleet Street. There was a very good ordinary of two dishes and pastry kept at Highbury Barn about this time at tenpence per head, including a penny to the waiter; and the company generally consisted of literary characters, a few Templars, and some citizens who had left off trade. The whole expenses of the day's fete never exceeded a crown, and oftener were from three-and-sixpence to four shillings; for which the party obtained good air and exercise, good living, the example of simple manners, and good conversation."

It would have been well indeed for Goldsmith had he been possessed of sufficient strength of character to remain satisfied with these simple pleasures, and to have lived the quiet and modest life of a man of letters on such income as he could derive from the best work he could produce. But it is this same Mr. Cooke who gives decisive testimony as to Goldsmith's increasing desire to "shine" by imitating the expenditure of the great; the natural consequence of which was that he only plunged himself into a morass of debt, advances, contracts for hack-work, and misery. "His debts rendered him at times so melancholy and dejected, that I am sure he felt himself a very unhappy man." Perhaps it was with some sudden resolve to flee from temptation, and grapple with the difficulties that beset him, that he, in conjunction with another Temple neighbour, Mr. Bott, rented a cottage some eight miles down the Edgware Road; and here he set to work on the *History of Rome*,

which he was writing for Davies. Apart from this hack-work, now rendered necessary by his debt, it is probable that one strong inducement leading him to this occasional seclusion was the progress he might be able to make with the *Deserted Village*. Amid all his town gaieties and country excursions, amid his dinners and suppers and dances, his borrowings, and contracts, and the hurried literary produce of the moment, he never forgot what was due to his reputation as an English poet. The journalistic bullies of the day might vent their spleen and envy on him; his best friends might smile at his conversational failures; the wits of the tavern might put up the horse-collar as before; but at least he had the consolation of his art. No one better knew than himself the value of those finished and musical lines he was gradually adding to the beautiful poem, the grace, and sweetness, and tender, pathetic charm of which make it one of the literary treasures of the English people.

The sorrows of debt were not Goldsmith's only trouble at this time. For some reason or other he seems to have become the especial object of spiteful attack on the part of the literary cut-throats of the day. And Goldsmith, though he might listen with respect to the wise advice of Johnson on such matters, was never able to cultivate Johnson's habit of absolute indifference to anything that might be said or sung of him. "The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicols, and Hendersons," says Lord Macaulay—speaking of Johnson, "did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or

Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter—

'Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum.'

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live, is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttlecock which could be kept up only by being beaten back, as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apophthegm of Bentley, that no man was ever written down but by himself."

It was not given to Goldsmith to feel "like the Monument" on any occasion whatsoever. He was anxious to have the esteem of his friends; he was sensitive to a degree; denunciation or malice, begotten of envy that Johnson would have passed unheeded, wounded him to the quick. "The insults to which he had to submit," Thackeray wrote with a quick and warm sympathy, "are shocking to read of—slander, contumely, vulgar satire, brutal malignity perverting his commonest motives and actions: he had his share of these, and one's anger is roused at reading of them, as it is at seeing a woman insulted or a child assaulted,

at the notion that a creature so very gentle, and weak, and full of love should have had to suffer so." Goldsmith's revenge, his defence of himself, his appeal to the public, were the *Traveller*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the *Deserted Village;* but these came at long intervals; and in the meantime he had to bear with the anonymous malignity that pursued him as best he might. No doubt, when Burke was entertaining him at dinner; and when Johnson was openly deferring to him in conversation at the Club; and when Reynolds was painting his portrait, he could afford to forget Mr. Kenrick and the rest of the libelling clan.

The occasions on which Johnson deferred to Goldsmith in conversation were no doubt few; but at all events the bludgeon of the great Cham would appear to have come down less frequently on "honest Goldy" than on the other members of that famous coterie. It could come down heavily enough. "Sir," said an incautious person, "drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?" "Yes, sir," was the reply, "if he sat next *you*." Johnson, however, was considerate towards Goldsmith, partly because of his affection for him, and partly because he saw under what disadvantages Goldsmith entered the lists. For one thing, the conversation of those evenings would seem to have drifted continually into the mere definition of phrases. Now Johnson had spent years of his life, during the compilation of his Dictionary, in doing nothing else but defining; and, whenever the dispute took a phraseological turn, he had it all his own way. Goldsmith, on the other hand, was apt to become confused in his eager

self-consciousness. "Goldsmith," said Johnson to Boswell, "should not be for ever attempting to shine in conversation; he has not temper for it, he is so much mortified when he fails. . . When he contends, if he gets the better, it is a very little addition to a man of his literary reputation: if he does not get the better, he is miserably vexed." Boswell, nevertheless, admits that Goldsmith was "often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson himself," and goes on to tell how Goldsmith, relating the fable of the little fishes who petitioned Jupiter, and perceiving that Johnson was laughing at him, immediately said, "Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES." Who but Goldsmith would have dared to play jokes on the sage? At supper they have rumps and kidneys. The sage expresses his approval of "the pretty little things;" but profoundly observes that one must eat a good many of them before being satisfied. "Ay, but how many of them," asks Goldsmith, "would reach to the moon?" The sage professes his ignorance; and, indeed, remarks that that would exceed even Goldsmith's calculations; when the practical joker observes, "Why, *one*, sir, if it were long enough." Johnson was completely beaten on this occasion. "Well, sir, I have deserved it. I should not have provoked so foolish an answer by so foolish a question."

It was Johnson himself, moreover, who told the story of Goldsmith and himself being in Poets' Corner; of his saying to Goldsmith

"Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis,"

and of Goldsmith subsequently repeating the quotation when, having walked towards Fleet Street, they were confronted by the heads on Temple Bar. Even when Goldsmith was opinionated and wrong, Johnson's contradiction was in a manner gentle. "If you put a tub full of blood into a stable, the horses are like to go mad," observed Goldsmith. "I doubt that," was Johnson's reply. "Nay, sir, it is a fact well authenticated." Here Thrale interposed to suggest that Goldsmith should have the experiment tried in the stable; but Johnson merely said that, if Goldsmith began making these experiments, he would never get his book written at all. Occasionally, of course, Goldsmith was tossed and gored just like another. "But, sir," he had ventured to say, in opposition to Johnson, "when people live together who have something as to which they disagree, and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of Bluebeard, 'You may look into all the chambers but one.' But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber, to talk of that subject." Here, according to Boswell, Johnson answered in a loud voice, "Sir, I am not saying that *you* could live in friendship with a man from whom you differ as to one point; I am only saying that *I* could do it." But then again he could easily obtain pardon from the gentle Goldsmith for any occasional rudeness. One evening they had a sharp passage of arms at dinner; and thereafter the company adjourned to the Club, where Goldsmith sate silent and depressed. "Johnson perceived this," says Boswell, "and said aside to some of us, 'I'll make Goldsmith forgive me'; and then called to him in a loud voice, 'Dr. Goldsmith, something passed

to-day where you and I dined: I ask your pardon.' Goldsmith answered placidly, 'It must be much from you, sir, that I take ill.' And so at once the difference was over, and they were on as easy terms as ever, and Goldsmith rattled away as usual." For the rest, Johnson was the constant and doughty champion of Goldsmith as a man of letters. He would suffer no one to doubt the power and versatility of that genius which he had been amongst the first to recognise and encourage. "Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, as a comic writer, or as an historian," he announced to an assemblage of distinguished persons met together at dinner at Mr. Beauclerc's, "*he stands in the first class.*" And there was no one living who dared dispute the verdict—at least in Johnson's hearing.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE.

But it is time to return to the literary performances that gained for this uncouth Irishman so great an amount of consideration from the first men of his time. The engagement with Griffin about the *History of Animated Nature* was made at the beginning of 1769. The work was to occupy eight volumes; and Dr. Goldsmith was to receive eight hundred guineas for the complete copyright. Whether the undertaking was originally a suggestion of Griffin's, or of Goldsmith's own, does not appear. If it was the author's, it was probably only the first means that occurred to him of getting another advance; and that advance—£500 on account—he did actually get. But if it was the suggestion of the publisher, Griffin must have been a bold man. A writer whose acquaintance with animated nature was such as to allow him to make the "insidious tiger" a denizen of the backwoods of Canada,[1] was not a very safe authority. But perhaps Griffin had consulted Johnson before making this bargain; and we know that Johnson, though continually remarking on Goldsmith's

[1] See *Citizen of the World*, Letter XVII.

extraordinary ignorance of facts, was of opinion that the *History of Animated Nature* would be "as entertaining as a Persian tale." However, Goldsmith—no doubt after he had spent the five hundred guineas—tackled the work in earnest. When Boswell subsequently went out to call on him at another rural retreat he had taken on the Edgware Road, Boswell and Mickle, the translator of the *Lusiad*, found Goldsmith from home; "but, having a curiosity to see his apartment, we went in and found curious scraps of descriptions of animals scrawled upon the wall with a black-lead pencil." Meanwhile, this *Animated Nature* being in hand, the *Roman History* was published, and was very well received by the critics and by the public. "Goldsmith's abridgment," Johnson declared, "is better than that of Lucius Florus or Eutropius; and I will venture to say that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the *Roman History*, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying everything he has to say in a pleasing manner."

So thought the booksellers too; and the success of the *Roman History* only involved him in fresh projects of compilation. By an offer of £500 Davies induced him to lay aside for the moment the *Animated Nature* and begin "An History of England, from the Birth of the British Empire to the death of George the Second, in four volumes octavo." He also about this time undertook to write a Life of Thomas Parnell. Here, indeed, was plenty of work, and work promising good pay; but the depressing thing is that Goldsmith should have been the man who had to do it. He may have done it better than any one else could have done—indeed, looking over

the results of all that drudgery, we recognise now the happy turns of expression which were never long absent from Goldsmith's prose-writing—but the world could well afford to sacrifice all the task-work thus got through for another poem like the *Deserted Village* or the *Traveller*. Perhaps Goldsmith considered he was making a fair compromise when, for the sake of his reputation, he devoted a certain portion of his time to his poetical work, and then, to have money for fine clothes and high jinks, gave the rest to the booksellers. One critic, on the appearance of the *Roman History*, referred to the *Traveller*, and remarked that it was a pity that the "author of one of the best poems that has appeared since those of Mr. Pope, should not apply wholly to works of imagination." We may echo that regret now; but Goldsmith would at the time have no doubt replied that, if he had trusted to his poems, he would never have been able to pay £400 for chambers in the Temple. In fact he said as much to Lord Lisburn at one of the Academy dinners: "I cannot afford to court the draggle-tail muses, my Lord; they would let me starve; but by my other labours I can make shift to eat, and drink, and have good clothes." And there is little use in our regretting now that Goldsmith was not cast in a more heroic mould; we have to take him as he is; and be grateful for what he has left us.

It is a grateful relief to turn from these booksellers' contracts and forced labours to the sweet clear note of singing that one finds in the *Deserted Village*. This poem, after having been repeatedly announced and as often withdrawn for further revision, was at last published on the 26th of May, 1770, when Goldsmith

was in his forty-second year. The leading idea of it he had already thrown out in certain lines in the *Traveller*:—

> "Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,
> Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore?
> Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste,
> Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste?
> Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain,
> Lead stern depopulation in her train,
> And over fields where scattered hamlets rose
> In barren solitary pomp repose?
> Have we not seen at pleasure's lordly call
> The smiling long-frequented village fall?
> Beheld the duteous son, the sire decayed,
> The modest matron, and the blushing maid,
> Forced from their homes, a melancholy train,
> To traverse climes beyond the western main;
> Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,
> And Niagara stuns with thundering sound?"

—and elsewhere, in recorded conversations of his, we find that he had somehow got it into his head that the accumulation of wealth in a country was the parent of all evils, including depopulation. We need not stay here to discuss Goldsmith's position as a political economist; even although Johnson seems to sanction his theory in the four lines he contributed to the end of the poem. Nor is it worth while returning to that objection of Lord Macaulay's which has already been mentioned in these pages, further than to repeat that the poor Irish village in which Goldsmith was brought up, no doubt looked to him as charming as any Auburn, when he regarded it through the softening and beautifying mist

of years. It is enough that the abandonment by a number of poor people of the homes in which they and theirs have lived their lives, is one of the most pathetic facts in our civilisation; and that out of the various circumstances surrounding this forced migration Goldsmith has made one of the most graceful and touching poems in the English language. It is clear bird-singing; but there is a pathetic note in it. That imaginary ramble through the Lissoy that is far away has recalled more than his boyish sports; it has made him look back over his own life—the life of an exile.

> "I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
> Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
> To husband out life's taper at the close,
> And keep the flame from wasting by repose:
> I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
> Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
> Around my fire an evening group to draw,
> And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
> And, as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue
> Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
> I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
> Here to return—and die at home at last."

Who can doubt that it was of Lissoy he was thinking? Sir Walter Scott, writing a generation ago, said that "the church which tops the neighbouring hill," the mill and the brook were still to be seen in the Irish village; and that even

> "The hawthorn bush with seats beneath the shade
> For talking age and whispering lovers made,"

had been identified by the indefatigable tourist, and was of course being cut to pieces to make souvenirs. But indeed it is of little consequence whether we say that Auburn is an English village, or insist that it is only Lissoy idealised, as long as the thing is true in itself. And we know that this is true: it is not that one sees the place as a picture, but that one seems to be breathing its very atmosphere, and listening to the various cries that thrill the "hollow silence."

"Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.
There, as I past with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came softened from below;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school,
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spake the vacant mind."

Nor is it any romantic and impossible peasantry that is gradually brought before us. There are no Norvals in Lissoy. There is the old woman—Catherine Geraghty, they say, was her name—who gathered cresses in the ditches near her cabin. There is the village preacher whom Mrs. Hodson, Goldsmith's sister, took to be a portrait of their father; but whom others have identified as Henry Goldsmith, and even as the uncle Contarine: they may all have contributed. And then comes Paddy Byrne. Amid all the pensive tenderness of the poem this description of the schoolmaster, with its strokes of demure humour, is introduced with delightful effect.

"Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school.
A man severe he was, and stern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant knew:
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper circling round
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.
Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault;
The village all declared how much he knew:
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too:
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge:
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill;
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learned length and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew."

All this is so simple and natural that we cannot fail to believe in the reality of Auburn, or Lissoy, or whatever the village may be supposed to be. We visit the clergyman's cheerful fireside; and look in on the noisy school; and sit in the evening in the ale-house to listen to the profound politics talked there. But the crisis comes. Auburn *delenda est.* Here, no doubt, occurs the least probable part of the poem. Poverty of soil is a common cause of emigration; land that produces oats (when it can produce oats at all) three-fourths mixed with weeds, and hay chiefly consisting of rushes, naturally

discharges its surplus population as families increase; and though the wrench of parting is painful enough, the usual result is a change from starvation to competence. It more rarely happens that a district of peace and plenty, such as Auburn was supposed to see around it, is depopulated to add to a great man's estate.

> "The man of wealth and pride
> Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
> Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
> Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:
> o o o o o o
> His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
> Indignant spurns the cottage from the green:"

—and so forth. This seldom happens; but it does happen; and it has happened, in our own day, in England. It is within the last twenty years that an English landlord, having faith in his riches, bade a village be removed and cast elsewhere, so that it should no longer be visible from his windows: and it was forthwith removed. But any solitary instance like this is not sufficient to support the theory that wealth and luxury are inimical to the existence of a hardy peasantry; and so we must admit, after all, that it is poetical exigency rather than political economy that has decreed the destruction of the loveliest village of the plain. Where, asks the poet, are the driven poor to find refuge, when even the fenceless commons are seized upon and divided by the rich? In the great cities?—

> "To see profusion that he must not share;
> To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
> To pamper luxury and thin mankind."

It is in this description of a life in cities that there occurs an often-quoted passage, which has in it one of the most perfect lines in English poetry :—

"Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shivering female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty blest,
Has wept at tales of innocence distrest;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head.
And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown."

Goldsmith wrote in a pre-Wordsworthian age, when, even in the realms of poetry, a primrose was not much more than a primrose; but it is doubtful whether, either before, during, or since Wordsworth's time the sentiment that the imagination can infuse into the common and familiar things around us ever received more happy expression than in the well-known line,

"*Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn.*"

No one has as yet succeeded in defining accurately and concisely what poetry is; but at all events this line is surcharged with a certain quality which is conspicuously absent in such a production as the *Essay on Man*. Another similar line is to be found further on in the description of the distant scenes to which the proscribed people are driven;

"Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe."

Indeed, the pathetic side of emigration has never been so powerfully presented to us as in this poem—

"When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly looked their last,
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main,
And shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
o o o o o o o
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness are there;
And piety with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love."

And worst of all, in this imaginative departure, we find that Poetry herself is leaving our shores. She is now to try her voice

"On Torno's cliffs or Pambamarca's side;"

and the poet, in the closing lines of the poem, bids her a passionate and tender farewell:—

"And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;

Unfit in these degenerate times of shame
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell, and O! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime;
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain;
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain:
Teach him, that states of native strength possest,
Though very poor, may still be very blest;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

So ends this graceful, melodious, tender poem, the position of which in English literature, and in the estimation of all who love English literature, has not been disturbed by any fluctuations of literary fashion. We may give more attention at the moment to the new experiments of the poetic method; but we return only with renewed gratitude to the old familiar strain, not the least merit of which is that it has nothing about it of foreign tricks or graces. In English literature there is nothing more thoroughly English than these writings produced by an Irishman. And whether or not it was Paddy Byrne, and Catherine Geraghty, and the Lissoy ale-house that

Goldsmith had in his mind when he was writing the poem, is not of much consequence: the manner and language and feeling are all essentially English; so that we never think of calling Goldsmith anything but an English poet.

The poem met with great and immediate success. Of course everything that Dr. Goldsmith now wrote was read by the public; he had not to wait for the recommendation of the reviews; but, in this case, even the reviews had scarcely anything but praise in the welcome of his new book. It was dedicated, in graceful and ingenious terms, to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who returned the compliment by painting a picture and placing on the engraving of it this inscription: "This attempt to express a character in the *Deserted Village* is dedicated to Dr. Goldsmith by his sincere friend and admirer, Sir Joshua Reynolds." What Goldsmith got from Griffin for the poem is not accurately known; and this is a misfortune, for the knowledge would have enabled us to judge whether at that time it was possible for a poet to court the draggle-tail muses without risk of starvation. But if fame were his chief object in the composition of the poem, he was sufficiently rewarded; and it is to be surmised that by this time the people in Ireland—no longer implored to get subscribers—had heard of the proud position won by the vagrant youth who had "taken the world for his pillow" some eighteen years before.

That his own thoughts had sometimes wandered back to the scenes and friends of his youth during this labour of love, we know from his letters. In January of this year, while as yet the *Deserted*

Village was not quite through the press, he wrote to his brother Maurice; and expressed himself as most anxious to hear all about the relatives from whom he had been so long parted. He has something to say about himself too; wishes it to be known that the King has lately been pleased to make him Professor of Ancient History "in a Royal Academy of Painting which he has just established;" but gives no very flourishing account of his circumstances. "Honours to one in my situation are something like ruffles to a man that wants a shirt." However, there is some small legacy of fourteen or fifteen pounds left him by his uncle Contarine, which he understands to be in the keeping of his cousin Lawder; and to this wealth he is desirous of foregoing all claim: his relations must settle how it may be best expended. But there is not a reference to his literary achievements, or the position won by them; not the slightest yielding to even a pardonable vanity; it is a modest, affectionate letter. The only hint that Maurice Goldsmith receives of the esteem in which his brother is held in London, is contained in a brief mention of Johnson, Burke, and others as his friends. "I have sent my cousin Jenny a miniature picture of myself, as I believe it is the most acceptable present I can offer. I have ordered it to be left for her at George Faulkenor's, folded in a letter. The face, you well know, is ugly enough; but it is finely painted. I will shortly also send my friends over the Shannon some mezzotinto prints of myself, and some more of my friends here, such as Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, and Colman. I believe I have written an hundred letters to different friends in your country, and never received an answer

from any of them. I do not know how to account for this, or why they are unwilling to keep up for me those regards which I must ever retain for them." The letter winds up with an appeal for news, news, news.

CHAPTER XV.

OCCASIONAL WRITINGS.

Some two months after the publication of the *Deserted Village*, when its success had been well assured, Goldsmith proposed to himself the relaxation of a little Continental tour; and he was accompanied by three ladies, Mrs. Horneck and her two pretty daughters, who doubtless took more charge of him than he did of them. This Mrs. Horneck, the widow of a certain Captain Horneck, was connected with Reynolds, while Burke was the guardian of the two girls; so that it was natural that they should make the acquaintance of Dr. Goldsmith. A foolish attempt has been made to weave out of the relations supposed to exist between the younger of the girls and Goldsmith an imaginary romance; but there is not the slightest actual foundation for anything of the kind. Indeed the best guide we can have to the friendly and familiar terms on which he stood with regard to the Hornecks and their circle, is the following careless and jocular reply to a chance invitation sent him by the two sisters:—

"Your mandate I got,
You may all go to pot;

Had your senses been right,
You'd have sent before night;
As I hope to be saved,
I put off being shaved;
For I could not make bold,
While the matter was cold,
To meddle in suds,
Or to put on my duds;
So tell Horneck and Nesbitt
And Baker and his bit,
And Kauffman beside,
And the Jessamy bride;
With the rest of the crew,
The Reynoldses two,
Little Comedy's face
And the Captain in lace.

o o o o

Yet how can I when vext
Thus stray from my text?
Tell each other to rue
Your Devonshire crew,
For sending so late
To one of my state.
But 'tis Reynolds's way
From wisdom to stray,
And Angelica's whim
To be frolic like him.

But, alas! your good worships, how could they be wiser,
When both have been spoiled in to-day's *Advertiser?*"

"The Jessamy Bride" was the pet nickname he had bestowed on the younger Miss Horneck—the heroine of the speculative romance just mentioned; "Little Comedy" was her sister; "the Captain in lace" their brother, who was in the Guards. No doubt Mrs. Horneck and her daughters were very pleased to have

with them on this Continental trip so distinguished a person as Dr. Goldsmith; and he must have been very ungrateful if he was not glad to be provided with such charming companions. The story of the sudden envy he displayed of the admiration excited by the two handsome young Englishwomen as they stood at a hotel-window in Lille, is so incredibly foolish that it needs scarcely be repeated here; unless to repeat the warning that, if ever anybody was so dense as not to see the humour of that piece of acting, one had better look with grave suspicion on every one of the stories told about Goldsmith's vanities and absurdities.

Even with such pleasant companions, the trip to Paris was not everything he had hoped. "I find," he wrote to Reynolds from Paris, "that travelling at twenty and at forty are very different things. I set out with all my confirmed habits about me, and can find nothing on the Continent so good as when I formerly left it. One of our chief amusements here is scolding at everything we meet with, and praising every thing and every person we left at home. You may judge therefore whether your name is not frequently bandied at table among us. To tell you the truth, I never thought I could regret your absence so much, as our various mortifications on the road have often taught me to do. I could tell you of disasters and adventures without number, of our lying in barns, and of my being half poisoned with a dish of green peas, of our quarrelling with postilions and being cheated by our landladies, but I reserve all this for a happy hour which I expect to share with you upon my return." The fact is that although Goldsmith had seen a good deal of foreign

travel, the manner of his making the grand tour in his youth was not such as to fit him for acting as courier to a party of ladies. However, if they increased his troubles, they also shared them; and in this same letter he bears explicit testimony to the value of their companionship. "I will soon be among you, better pleased with my situation at home than I ever was before. And yet I must say, that if anything could make France pleasant, the very good women with whom I am at present would certainly do it. I could say more about that, but I intend showing them this letter before I send it away." Mrs. Horneck, Little Comedy, the Jessamy Bride, and the Professor of Ancient History at the Royal Academy, all returned to London; the last to resume his round of convivialities at taverns, excursions into regions of more fashionable amusement along with Reynolds, and task-work aimed at the pockets of the booksellers.

It was a happy-go-lucky sort of life. We find him now showing off his fine clothes and his sword and wig at Ranelagh Gardens, and again shut up in his chambers compiling memoirs and histories in hot haste; now the guest of Lord Clare, and figuring at Bath, and again delighting some small domestic circle by his quips and cranks; playing jokes for the amusement of children, and writing comic letters in verse to their elders; everywhere and at all times merry, thoughtless, good-natured. And, of course, we find also his humorous pleasantries being mistaken for blundering stupidity. In perfect good faith Boswell describes how a number of people burst out laughing when Goldsmith publicly complained that he had met Lord Camden at Lord

Clare's house in the country, "and he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man." Goldsmith's claiming to be a very extraordinary person was precisely a stroke of that humorous self-depreciation in which he was continually indulging; and the Jessamy Bride has left it on record that "on many occasions, from the peculiar manner of his humour, and assumed frown of countenance, what was often uttered in jest was mistaken by those who did not know him for earnest." This would appear to have been one of those occasions. The company burst out laughing at Goldsmith's having made a fool of himself; and Johnson was compelled to come to his rescue. "Nay, gentlemen, Dr. Goldsmith is in the right. A nobleman ought to have made up to such a man as Goldsmith; and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him."

Mention of Lord Clare naturally recalls the *Haunch of Venison*. Goldsmith was particularly happy in writing bright and airy verses; the grace and lightness of his touch has rarely been approached. It must be confessed, however, that in this direction he was somewhat of an Autolycus; unconsidered trifles he freely appropriated; but he committed these thefts with scarcely any concealment, and with the most charming air in the world. In fact some of the snatches of verse which he contributed to the *Bee* scarcely profess to be anything else than translations, though the originals are not given. But who is likely to complain when we get as the result such a delightful piece of nonsense as the famous Elegy on that Glory of her Sex, Mrs. Mary Blaize, which has been the parent of a vast progeny since Goldsmith's time?

"Good people all, with one accord
Lament for Madam Blaize,
Who never wanted a good word,
From those who spoke her praise.

"The needy seldom passed her door,
And always found her kind;
She freely lent to all the poor,—
Who left a pledge behind.

"She strove the neighbourhood to please,
With manners wondrous winning;
And never followed wicked ways,—
Unless when she was sinning.

"At church, in silks and satins new,
With hoop of monstrous size,
She never slumbered in her pew,—
But when she shut her eyes.

"Her love was sought, I do aver,
By twenty beaux and more;
The king himself has followed her,—
When she has walked before.

"But now her wealth and finery fled,
Her hangers-on cut short all;
The doctors found, when she was dead,—
Her last disorder mortal.

"Let us lament, in sorrow sore,
For Kent Street well may say,
That had she lived a twelvemonth more,—
She had not died to-day."

The *Haunch of Venison*, on the other hand, is a poetical letter of thanks to Lord Clare—an easy, jocular epistle, in which the writer has a cut or two at certain of his literary brethren. Then, as he is looking at the venison,

and determining not to send it to any such people as Hiffernan or Higgins, who should step in but our old friend Beau Tibbs, or some one remarkably like him in manner and speech?—

"While thus I debated, in reverie centred,
An acquaintance, a friend as he called himself, entered;
An under-bred, fine-spoken fellow was he,
And he smiled as he looked at the venison and me.
'What have we got here?—Why this is good eating!
Your own, I suppose—or is it in waiting?'
'Why, whose should it be?' cried I with a flounce;
'I get these things often'—but that was a bounce:
'Some lords, my acquaintance, that settle the nation,
Are pleased to be kind—but I hate ostentation.'
'If that be the case then,' cried he, very gay,
'I'm glad I have taken this house in my way.
To-morrow you take a poor dinner with me;
No words—I insist on't—precisely at three;
We'll have Johnson, and Burke; all the wits will be there;
My acquaintance is slight, or I'd ask my Lord Clare.
And now that I think on't, as I am a sinner!
We wanted this venison to make out the dinner.
What say you—a pasty? It shall, and it must,
And my wife, little Kitty, is famous for crust.
Here, porter! this venison with me to Mile End;
No stirring—I beg—my dear friend—my dear friend!'
Thus, snatching his hat, he brushed off like the wind,
And the porter and eatables followed behind."

We need not follow the vanished venison—which did not make its appearance at the banquet any more than did Johnson or Burke—further than to say that if Lord Clare did not make it good to the poet he did not deserve to have his name associated with such a clever and careless *jeu d'esprit*.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER.

But the writing of smart verses could not keep Dr. Goldsmith alive, more especially as dinner-parties, Ranelagh masquerades, and similar diversions pressed heavily on his finances. When his *History of England* appeared, the literary cut-throats of the day accused him of having been bribed by the Government to betray the liberties of the people:[1] a foolish charge. What Goldsmith got for the *English History* was the sum originally stipulated for, and now no doubt all spent; with a further sum of fifty guineas for an abridgment of the work. Then, by this time, he had persuaded Griffin to advance him the whole of the eight hundred guineas for the *Animated Nature*, though he had only done about a third part of the book. At the instigation of Newbery he had begun a story after the manner of the *Vicar of Wakefield;* but it appears that such chapters as he had written were not deemed

[1] "God knows I had no thought for or against liberty in my head; my whole aim being to make up a book of a decent size that, as Squire Richard says, 'would do no harm to nobody.'"—Goldsmith to Langton, September, 1771.

to be promising; and the undertaking was abandoned. The fact is, Goldsmith was now thinking of another method of replenishing his purse. The *Vicar of Wakefield* had brought him little but reputation; the *Good-natured Man* had brought him £500. It was to the stage that he now looked for assistance out of the financial slough in which he was plunged. He was engaged in writing a comedy; and that comedy was *She Stoops to Conquer*.

In the Dedication to Johnson which was prefixed to this play on its appearance in type, Goldsmith hints that the attempt to write a comedy not of the sentimental order then in fashion, was a hazardous thing; and also that Colman, who saw the piece in its various stages, was of this opinion too. Colman threw cold water on the undertaking from the very beginning. It was only extreme pressure on the part of Goldsmith's friends that induced—or rather compelled—him to accept the comedy; and that, after he had kept the unfortunate author in the tortures of suspense for month after month. But although Goldsmith knew the danger, he was resolved to face it. He hated the sentimentalists and all their works; and determined to keep his new comedy faithful to nature, whether people called it low or not. His object was to raise a genuine, hearty laugh; not to write a piece for school declamation; and he had enough confidence in himself to do the work in his own way. Moreover he took the earliest possible opportunity, in writing this piece, of poking fun at the sensitive creatures who had been shocked by the "vulgarity" of *The Good-natured Man*. "Bravo! Bravo!" cry the jolly companions of Tony Lumpkin, when that promising buckeen

has finished his song at the Three Pigeons; then follows criticism:—

"*First Fellow.* The squire has got spunk in him.

Second Fel. I loves to hear him sing, bekeays he never gives us nothing that's low.

Third Fel. O damn anything that's low, I cannot bear it.

Fourth Fel. The genteel thing is the genteel thing any time: if so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation accordingly.

Third Fel. I likes the maxum of it, Master Muggins. What, though I am obligated to dance a bear, a man may be a gentleman for all that. May this be my poison, if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelest of tunes; 'Water Parted,' or the 'The Minuet in Ariadne.'"

Indeed, Goldsmith, however he might figure in society, was always capable of holding his own when he had his pen in his hand. And even at the outset of this comedy one sees how much he has gained in literary confidence since the writing of the *Good-natured Man*. (Here there is no anxious stiffness at all; but a brisk, free conversation, full of point that is not too formal, and yet conveying all the information that has usually to be crammed into a first scene. In taking as the groundwork of his plot that old adventure that had befallen himself—his mistaking a squire's house for an inn—he was hampering himself with something that was not the less improbable because it had actually happened; but we begin to forget all the improbabilities through the naturalness of the people to whom we are introduced, and the brisk movement and life of the piece.

Fashions in dramatic literature may come and go; but the wholesome good-natured fun of *She Stoops to Conquer*

is as capable of producing a hearty laugh now, as it was when it first saw the light in Covent Garden. Tony Lumpkin is one of the especial favourites of the theatre-going public; and no wonder. With all the young cub's jibes and jeers, his impudence and grimaces, one has a sneaking love for the scapegrace; we laugh with him, rather than at him; how can we fail to enjoy those malevolent tricks of his when he so obviously enjoys them himself? And Diggory—do we not owe an eternal debt of gratitude to honest Diggory for telling us about Quld Grouse in the gunroom, that immortal joke at which thousands and thousands of people have roared with laughter, though they never any one of them could tell what the story was about? The scene in which the old squire lectures his faithful attendants on their manners and duties, is one of the truest bits of comedy on the English stage:

"*Mr. Hardcastle.* But you're not to stand so, with your hands in your pockets. Take your hands from your pockets, Roger; and from your head, you blockhead you. See how Diggory carries his hands. They're a little too stiff, indeed, but that's no great matter.

Diggory. Ay, mind how I hold them. I learned to hold my hands this way when I was upon drill for the militia. And so being upon drill——

Hard. You must not be so talkative, Diggory. You must be all attention to the guests. You must hear us talk, and not think of talking; you must see us drink, and not think of drinking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating.

Dig. By the laws, your worship, that's parfectly unpossible, Whenever Diggory sees yeating going forward, ecod, he's always wishing for a mouthful himself.

Hard. Blockhead! Is not a bellyfull in the kitchen as good as a bellyfull in the parlour? Stay your stomach with that reflection.

Dig. Ecod, I thank your worship, I'll make a shift to stay my stomach with a slice of cold beef in the pantry.

Hard. Diggory, you are too talkative.—Then, if I happen to say a good thing, or tell a good story at table, you must not all burst out a-laughing, as if you made part of the company.

Dig. Then ecod your worship must not tell the story of Ould Grouse in the gunroom: I can't help laughing at that —he! he! he!—for the soul of me. We have laughed at that these twenty years—ha! ha! ha!

Hard. Ha! ha! ha! The story is a good one. Well, honest Diggory, you may laugh at that—but still remember to be attentive. Suppose one of the company should call for a glass of wine, how will you behave? A glass of wine, sir, if you please (*to* DIGGORY).—Eh, why don't you move?

Dig. Ecod, your worship, I never have courage till I see the eatables and drinkables brought upo' the table, and then I'm as bauld as a lion.

Hard. What, will nobody move?

First Serv. I'm not to leave this pleace.

Second Serv. I'm sure it's no pleace of mine.

Third Serv. Nor mine, for sartain.

Dig. Wauns, and I'm sure it canna be mine."

No doubt all this is very "low" indeed; and perhaps Mr. Colman may be forgiven for suspecting that the refined wits of the day would be shocked by these rude humours of a parcel of servants. But all that can be said in this direction was said at the time by Horace Walpole, in a letter to a friend of his; and this criticism is so amusing in its pretence and imbecility that it is worth quoting at large. "Dr. Goldsmith has written a comedy," says this profound critic, "— no, it is the

lowest of all farces; it is not the subject I condemn, though very vulgar, but the execution. The drift tends to no moral, no edification of any kind—the situations, however, are well imagined, and make one laugh in spite of the grossness of the dialogue, the forced witticisms, and total improbability of the whole plan and conduct. But what disgusts me most is, that though the characters are very low, and aim at low humour, not one of them says a sentence that is natural, or marks any character at all." Horace Walpole sighing for edification—from a Covent Garden comedy! Surely, if the old gods have any laughter left, and if they take any notice of what is done in the literary world here below, there must have rumbled through the courts of Olympus a guffaw of sardonic laughter, when that solemn criticism was put down on paper.

Meanwhile Colman's original fears had developed into a sort of stupid obstinacy. He was so convinced that the play would not succeed, that he would spend no money in putting it on the stage; while far and wide he announced its failure as a foregone conclusion. Under this gloom of vaticination the rehearsals were nevertheless proceeded with—the brunt of the quarrels among the players falling wholly on Goldsmith, for the manager seems to have withdrawn in despair; while all the Johnson confraternity were determined to do what they could for Goldsmith on the opening night. That was the 15th of March, 1773. His friends invited the author to dinner as a prelude to the play; Dr. Johnson was in the chair; there was plenty of gaiety. But this means of keeping up the anxious author's spirits was not very successful. Goldsmith's mouth, we are told by Reynolds,

became so parched "from the agitation of his mind, that he was unable to swallow a single mouthful." Moreover, he could not face the ordeal of sitting through the play; when his friends left the tavern and betook themselves to the theatre, he went away by himself; and was subsequently found walking in St. James's Park. The friend who discovered him there, persuaded him that his presence in the theatre might be useful in case of an emergency; and ultimately got him to accompany him to Covent Garden. When Goldsmith reached the theatre, the fifth act had been begun.

Oddly enough, the first thing he heard on entering the stage-door was a hiss. The story goes that the poor author was dreadfully frightened; and that in answer to a hurried question, Colman exclaimed, "Psha! Doctor, don't be afraid of a squib, when we have been sitting these two hours on a barrel of gunpowder." If this was meant as a hoax, it was a cruel one; if meant seriously, it was untrue. For the piece had turned out a great hit. From beginning to end of the performance the audience were in a roar of laughter; and the single hiss that Goldsmith unluckily heard was so markedly exceptional, that it became the talk of the town, and was variously attributed to one or other of Goldsmith's rivals. Colman, too, suffered at the hands of the wits for his gloomy and falsified predictions; and had, indeed, to beg Goldsmith to intercede for him. It is a great pity that Boswell was not in London at this time; for then we might have had a description of the supper that naturally would follow the play, and of Goldsmith's demeanour under this new success. Besides the gratification, moreover, of his choice of materials being

approved by the public, there was the material benefit accruing to him from the three "author's nights." These are supposed to have produced nearly five hundred pounds—a substantial sum in those days.

Boswell did not come to London till the second of April following; and the first mention we find of Goldsmith is in connection with an incident which has its ludicrous as well as its regrettable aspect. The further success of *She Stoops to Conquer* was not likely to propitiate the wretched hole-and-corner cut-throats that infested the journalism of that day. More especially was Kenrick driven mad with envy; and so, in a letter addressed to the *London Packet*, this poor creature determined once more to set aside the judgment of the public, and show Dr. Goldsmith in his true colours. The letter is a wretched production, full of personalities only fit for an angry washerwoman, and of rancour without point. But there was one passage in it that effectually roused Goldsmith's rage; for here the Jessamy Bride was introduced as "the lovely H—k." The letter was anonymous; but the publisher of the print, a man called Evans, was known; and so Goldsmith thought he would go and give Evans a beating. If he had asked Johnson's advice about the matter, he would no doubt have been told to pay no heed at all to anonymous scurrility—certainly not to attempt to reply to it with a cudgel. When Johnson heard that Foote meant to "take him off," he turned to Davies and asked him what was the common price of an oak stick; but an oak stick in Johnson's hands, and an oak stick in Goldsmith's hands, were two different things. However, to the bookseller's shop the indignant poet proceeded, in company

with a friend; got hold of Evans; accused him of having insulted a young lady by putting her name in his paper; and, when the publisher would fain have shifted the responsibility on to the editor, forthwith denounced him as a rascal, and hit him over the back with his cane. The publisher, however, was quite a match for Goldsmith; and there is no saying how the deadly combat might have ended, had not a lamp been broken overhead, the oil of which drenched both the warriors. This intervention of the superior gods was just as successful as a Homeric cloud; the fray ceased; Goldsmith and his friend withdrew; and ultimately an action for assault was compromised by Goldsmith's paying fifty pounds to a charity. Then the howl of the journals arose. Their prerogative had been assailed. "Attacks upon private character were the most liberal existing source of newspaper income," Mr. Forster writes; and so the pack turned with one cry on the unlucky poet. There was nothing of "the Monument" about poor Goldsmith; and at last he was worried into writing a letter of defence addressed to the public. "He has indeed done it very well," said Johnson to Boswell, "but it is a foolish thing well done." And further he remarked, "Why, sir, I believe it is the first time he has *beat;* he may have *been beaten* before. This, sir, is a new plume to him."

CHAPTER XVII.

INCREASING DIFFICULTIES.—THE END.

THE pecuniary success of *She Stoops to Conquer* did but little to relieve Goldsmith from those financial embarrassments which were now weighing heavily on his mind. And now he had less of the old high spirits that had enabled him to laugh off the cares of debt. His health became disordered; an old disease renewed its attacks, and was grown more violent because of his long-continued sedentary habits. Indeed, from this point to the day of his death—not a long interval, either—we find little but a record of successive endeavours, some of them wild and hopeless enough, to obtain money anyhow. Of course he went to the Club, as usual; and gave dinner-parties; and had a laugh or a song ready for the occasion. It is possible, also, to trace a certain growth of confidence in himself, no doubt the result of the repeated proofs of his genius he had put before his friends. It was something more than mere personal intimacy that justified the rebuke he administered to Reynolds, when the latter painted an allegorical picture representing the triumph of Beattie and Truth over Voltaire and Scepticism. "It very ill

becomes a man of your eminence and character," he said, "to debase so high a genius as Voltaire before so mean a writer as Beattie. Beattie and his book will be forgotten in ten years, while Voltaire's fame will last for ever. Take care it does not perpetuate this picture, to the shame of such a man as you." He was aware, too, of the position he had won for himself in English literature. He knew that people in after-days would ask about him; and it was with no sort of unwarrantable vainglory that he gave Percy certain materials for a biography which he wished him to undertake. Hence the *Percy Memoir*.

He was only forty-five when he made this request; and he had not suffered much from illness during his life; so that there was apparently no grounds for imagining that the end was near. But at this time Goldsmith began to suffer severe fits of depression; and he grew irritable and capricious of temper—no doubt another result of failing health. He was embroiled in disputes with the booksellers; and, on one occasion, seems to have been much hurt because Johnson, who had been asked to step in as arbiter, decided against him. He was offended with Johnson on another occasion because of his sending away certain dishes at a dinner given to him by Goldsmith, as a hint that these entertainments were too luxurious for one in Goldsmith's position. It was probably owing to some temporary feeling of this sort—perhaps to some expression of it on Goldsmith's part—that Johnson spoke of Goldsmith's "malice" towards him. Mrs. Thrale had suggested that Goldsmith would be the best person to write Johnson's biography. "The dog would write it best, to be sure,"

said Johnson, "but his particular malice towards me, and general disregard of truth, would make the book useless to all and injurious to my character." Of course it is always impossible to say what measure of jocular exaggeration there may not be in a chance phrase such as this: of the fact that there was no serious or permanent quarrel between the two friends we have abundant proof in Boswell's faithful pages.

To return to the various endeavours made by Goldsmith and his friends to meet the difficulties now closing in around him, we find, first of all, the familiar hack-work. For two volumes of a *History of Greece* he had received from Griffin £250. Then his friends tried to get him a pension from the Government; but this was definitely refused. An expedient of his own seemed to promise well at first. He thought of bringing out a *Popular Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, a series of contributions mostly by his friends, with himself as editor; and among those who offered to assist him were Johnson, Reynolds, Burke, and Dr. Burney. But the booksellers were afraid. The project would involve a large expense; and they had no high opinion of Goldsmith's business habits. Then he offered to alter *The Good-natured Man* for Garrick; but Garrick preferred to treat with him for a new comedy, and generously allowed him to draw on him for the money in advance. This last help enabled him to go to Barton for a brief holiday; but the relief was only temporary. On his return to London even his nearest friends began to observe the change in his manner. In the old days Goldsmith had faced pecuniary difficulties with a light heart; but now, his health broken, and every avenue

of escape apparently closed, he was giving way to despair. His friend Cradock, coming up to town, found Goldsmith in a most despondent condition; and also hints that the unhappy author was trying to conceal the true state of affairs. "I believe," says Cradock, "he died miserable, and that his friends were not entirely aware of his distress."

And yet it was during this closing period of anxiety, despondency, and gloomy foreboding, that the brilliant and humorous lines of *Retaliation* were written—that last scintillation of the bright and happy genius that was soon to be extinguished for ever. The most varied accounts have been given of the origin of this *jeu d'esprit;* and even Garrick's, which was meant to supersede and correct all others, is self-contradictory. For according to this version of the story, which was found among the Garrick papers, and which is printed in Mr. Cunningham's edition of Goldsmith's works, the whole thing arose out of Goldsmith and Garrick resolving one evening at the St. James's Coffee House to write each other's epitaph. Garrick's well-known couplet was instantly produced:

"Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, *for shortness called Noll,*
Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll."

Goldsmith, according to Garrick, either would not or could not retort at the moment; "but went to work, and some weeks after produced the following printed poem, called *Retaliation.*" But Garrick himself goes on to say, "The following poems in manuscript were written by several of the gentlemen on purpose to provoke the

Doctor to an answer, which came forth at last with great credit to him in *Retaliation*." The most probable version of the story, which may be pieced together from various sources, is that at the coffee-house named this business of writing comic epitaphs was started some evening or other by the whole company; that Goldsmith and Garrick pitted themselves against each other; that thereafter Goldsmith began as occasion served to write similar squibs about his friends, which were shown about as they were written; that thereupon those gentlemen, not to be behindhand, composed more elaborate pieces in proof of their wit; and that, finally, Goldsmith resolved to bind these fugitive lines of his together in a poem, which he left unfinished, and which, under the name of *Retaliation*, was published after his death. This hypothetical account receives some confirmation from the fact that the scheme of the poem and its component parts do not fit together well; the introduction looks like an after-thought; and has not the freedom and pungency of a piece of improvisation. An imaginary dinner is described, the guests being Garrick, Reynolds, Burke, Cumberland, and the rest of them, Goldsmith last of all. More wine is called for, until the whole of his companions have fallen beneath the table:

> "Then, with chaos and blunders encircling my head,
> Let me ponder, and tell what I think of the *dead*."

This is a somewhat clumsy excuse for introducing a series of epitaphs; but the epitaphs amply atone for it. That on Garrick is especially remarkable as a bit of

character-sketching; its shrewd hints—all in perfect courtesy and good humour—going a little nearer to the truth than is common in epitaphs of any sort:—

"Here lies David Garrick, describe me who can;
An abridgment of all that was pleasant in man.
As an actor, confessed without rival to shine:
As a wit, if not first, in the very first line:
Yet, with talents like these, and an excellent heart,
The man had his failings, a dupe to his art.
Like an ill-judging beauty, his colours he spread,
And beplastered with rouge his own natural red.
On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting;
'Twas only that, when he was off, he was acting.
With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
He turned and he varied full ten times a day:
Though secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick
If they were not his own by finessing and trick;
He cast off his friends, as a huntsman his pack,
For he knew when he pleased he could whistle them back.
Of praise a mere glutton, he swallowed what came;
And the puff of a dunce, he mistook it for fame;
Till his relish grown callous, almost to disease,
Who peppered the highest was surest to please.
But let us be candid, and speak out our mind:
If dunces applauded, he paid them in kind.
Ye Kenricks, ye Kellys, and Woodfalls so grave,
What a commerce was yours, while you got and you gave!
How did Grub Street re-echo the shouts that you raised,
While he was be-Rosciused, and you were bepraised.
But peace to his spirit, wherever it flies,
To act as an angel and mix with the skies:
Those poets who owe their best fame to his skill
Shall still be his flatterers, go where he will;
Old Shakespeare receive him with praise and with love,
And Beaumonts and Bens be his Kellys above."

The truth is that Goldsmith, though he was ready to bless his "honest little man" when he received from him sixty pounds in advance for a comedy not begun, never took quite so kindly to Garrick as to some of his other friends. There is no pretence of discrimination at all, for example, in the lines devoted in this poem to Reynolds. All the generous enthusiasm of Goldsmith's Irish nature appears here; he will admit of no possible rival to this especial friend of his :—

> "Here Reynolds is laid, and to tell you my mind,
> He has not left a wiser or better behind."

There is a tradition that the epitaph on Reynolds, ending with the unfinished line

> "By flattery unspoiled o o o"

was Goldsmith's last piece of writing. One would like to believe that, in any case.

Goldsmith had returned to his Edgware lodgings, and had, indeed, formed some notion of selling his chambers in the Temple, and living in the country for at least ten months in the year, when a sudden attack of his old disorder drove him into town again for medical advice. He would appear to have received some relief; but a nervous fever followed; and on the night of the 25th March, 1774, when he was but forty-six years of age, he took to his bed for the last time. At first he refused to regard his illness as serious; and insisted on dosing himself with certain fever-powders from which he had received benefit on previous occasions; but by and by as his strength gave way, he submitted to the advice of the physicians who were in attendance on him. Day

after day passed; his weakness visibly increasing, though, curiously enough, the symptoms of fever were gradually abating. At length one of the doctors, remarking to him that his pulse was in greater disorder than it should be from the degree of fever, asked him if his mind was at ease. "No, it is not," answered Goldsmith; and these were his last words. Early in the morning of Monday, April 4, convulsions set in; these continued for rather more than an hour; then the troubled brain and the sick heart found rest for ever.

When the news was carried to his friends, Burke, it is said, burst into tears, and Reynolds put aside his work for the day. But it does not appear that they had visited him during his illness; and neither Johnson, nor Reynolds, nor Burke, nor Garrick followed his body to the grave. It is true, a public funeral was talked of; and, among others, Reynolds, Burke, and Garrick were to have carried the pall; but this was abandoned; and Goldsmith was privately buried in the ground of the Temple Church on the 9th of April, 1774. Strangely enough, too, Johnson seems to have omitted all mention of Goldsmith from his letters to Boswell. It was not until Boswell had written to him, on June 24th, "You have said nothing to me about poor Goldsmith," that Johnson, writing on July 4, answered as follows:—"Of poor dear Dr. Goldsmith there is little to be told, more than the papers have made public. He died of a fever, made, I am afraid, more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to be heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before?"

But if the greatest grief at the sudden and premature death of Goldsmith would seem to have been shown at the moment by certain wretched creatures who were found weeping on the stairs leading to his chambers, it must not be supposed that his fine friends either forgot him, or ceased to regard his memory with a great gentleness and kindness. Some two years after, when a monument was about to be erected to Goldsmith in Westminster Abbey, Johnson consented to write "the poor dear Doctor's epitaph;" and so anxious were the members of that famous circle in which Goldsmith had figured, that a just tribute should be paid to his genius, that they even ventured to send a round robin to the great Cham desiring him to amend his first draft. Now, perhaps, we have less interest in Johnson's estimate of Goldsmith's genius—though it contains the famous *Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*—than in the phrases which tell of the honour paid to the memory of the dead poet by the love of his companions and the faithfulness of his friends. It may here be added that the precise spot where Goldsmith was buried in the Temple churchyard is unknown. So lived and so died Oliver Goldsmith.

In the foregoing pages the writings of Goldsmith have been given so prominent a place in the history of his life that it is unnecessary to take them here collectively and endeavour to sum up their distinctive qualities. As much as could be said within the limited space has, it is hoped, been said about their genuine and tender pathos, that never at any time

verges on the affected or theatrical; about their quaint delicate, delightful humour; about that broader humour that is not afraid to provoke the wholesome laughter of mankind by dealing with common and familiar ways, and manners, and men; about that choiceness of diction, that lightness and grace of touch, that lend a charm even to Goldsmith's ordinary hack-work.

Still less necessary, perhaps, is it to review the facts and circumstances of Goldsmith's life; and to make of them an example, a warning, or an accusation. That has too often been done. His name has been used to glorify a sham Bohemianism—a Bohemianism that finds it easy to live in taverns, but does not find it easy, so far as one sees, to write poems like the *Deserted Village*. His experiences as an author have been brought forward to swell the cry about neglected genius—that is, by writers who assume their genius in order to prove the neglect. The misery that occasionally befell him during his wayward career has been made the basis of an accusation against society, the English constitution, Christianity—Heaven knows what. It is time to have done with all this nonsense. Goldsmith resorted to the hack-work of literature when everything else had failed him; and he was fairly paid for it. When he did better work, when he "struck for honest fame," the nation gave him all the honour that he could have desired. With an assured reputation, and with ample means of subsistence, he obtained entrance into the most distinguished society then in England—he was made the friend of England's greatest in the arts and literature—and could have confined himself to that society exclusively if he had chosen. His temperament, no doubt, exposed him to

suffering; and the exquisite sensitiveness of a man of genius may demand our sympathy; but in far greater measure is our sympathy demanded for the thousands upon thousands of people, who, from illness or nervous excitability, suffer from quite as keen a sensitiveness without the consolation of the fame that genius brings.

In plain truth, Goldsmith himself would have been the last to put forward pleas humiliating alike to himself and to his calling. Instead of beseeching the State to look after authors; instead of imploring society to grant them "recognition;" instead of saying of himself "he wrote, and paid the penalty;" he would frankly have admitted that he chose to live his life his own way, and therefore paid the penalty. This is not written with any desire of upbraiding Goldsmith. He did choose to live his own life his own way, and we now have the splendid and beautiful results of his work; and the world—looking at these with a constant admiration, and with a great and lenient love for their author—is not anxious to know what he did with his guineas, or whether the milkman was ever paid. "He had raised money and squandered it, by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. BUT LET NOT HIS FRAILTIES BE REMEMBERED: HE WAS A VERY GREAT MAN." This is Johnson's wise summing up; and with it we may here take leave of gentle Goldsmith.

THE END.

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